



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 1, 2024

The News & Observer

Carolina Hurricanes had 10 picks at 2024 NHL Draft. Who did the Canes select?

By Justin Pelletier and Chip Alexander

For the second straight day, the Carolina Hurricanes kept their focus on their NHL Draft business

The Canes did conduct some trades Saturday – of draft picks, not players.

While the attention of many Hurricanes fans continues to be on what could be a roster shakeup in the next few days, especially when NHL free agency begins, the Canes made use of their 10 draft picks Saturday. Other teams made some splashy trades, but not the Canes.

The Tampa Bay Lightning dealt defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to the Utah Hockey Club and forward Tanner Jeannot to the Los Angeles Kings. That was eye-opening in that it opened up \$11 million in salary cap space for the Lightning with the start of NHL free agency on Monday.

The Hurricanes did not use their first-round pick Friday when the draft began at the Sphere in Las Vegas, trading it to the Chicago Blackhawks for two second-round picks.

With the No. 34 overall pick, second in the second round, the Hurricanes selected Dominik Badinka, a Czech-born defenseman playing in Malmö, Sweden.

The Canes have shown a penchant for drafting Russian players in recent years, and did so again Saturday.

With its second pick of the second round, No. 50 overall, Carolina drafted 5-foot-11, 187-pound left wing Nikita Artamonov. That was just a start.

Assistant general manager Darren Yorke, who heads up the amateur draft for the team, has praised the work of Russian scout Oleg Smirnov. By day's end, the Canes had taken six Russian players and now have selected 15 since 2022.

Near the end of the second round, the Canes added another pick to their arsenal by trading their third pick, No. 60 overall, to Columbus – and former Carolina GM Don Waddell – for a third-round pick, No. 69 overall, and a fifth-round pick, No. 133 overall.

With that 69th overall pick, the Canes snagged Swedish defender Noel Fransen.

The Canes traded the No. 92 pick to the Blackhawks for a 2025 third-round pick.

Carolina jumped back into the selection process late in the fourth round, using the 27th pick in the round, No. 124 overall, to take another Russian, Alexander Siryatsky. The 6-2, 159-pound defender played Russian junior hockey last season.

The Hurricanes went back to Sweden for their first pick of the fifth round, selecting left wing Oskar Vuollet at No. 133 overall, and added right wing Justin Poirier out of Baie-Comeau of the Quebec-Maritime Junior Hockey League at No. 156.

With the first of three scheduled picks in the sixth round, the Canes drafted Russian Timur Kol, a 6-4, 204-pound defenseman, at No. 168 overall. At No. 184, Carolina tabbed Roman Shokhrin, a tall defender from Russia, and at No. 188, the Canes selected Russian left wing Fyodor Avramov.

Carolina Hurricanes 2024 NHL Draft picks

• Round 2, No. 34 overall:

Dominik Badinka, defenseman

Badinka, a Czech native, is a right-shot D and has good size at 6-3 and 190 pounds. Was ranked 14th among international skaters playing for Malmö in the Swedish Hockey League. His twin brother, Daniel, is a forward and also played for Malmö

• Round 2, No. 50 overall:

Nikita Artamonov, forward

Another Russian for the Canes. Considered a late bloomer and possible first-rounder, he has a solid overall game and strong hockey IQ according to scouts. Listed at 5-11 and 187 pounds, he played 54 games for Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod in the KHL

• Round 3, No. 69 overall:

Noel Fransen, defenseman

Fransen, said to be a good puck-moving D-man, played for Farjestad in the Swedish junior league, with 44 points (20 goals, 24 assists) in 45 games. Also played four games for Farjestad's SHL team. Seen as an offensive defenseman and admires Erik Karlsson of the Penguins.

• Round 4, No. 124 overall:

Alexander Siryatsky, defenseman

A lean D-man listed at 6-2 and 159 pounds, he is said to be a player with quick reactions on the ice and strong on positioning. Played 36 games last season for the Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk junior team of the MHL but also got in three games for the Metallurg Magnitogorsk KHL team

• Round 5, No. 133 overall:

Oskar Vuollet, forward

Vuollet, listed at 5-11 and 173 pounds, played for Skellefteå and was fifth in the Swedish junior league in scoring with 61 points, with 29 goals. He then starred in the playoffs, with 14 goals and 21 points in nine games.

Scouts like his skill and speed and ability to excel with a faster pace of play, and believe he can quickly adapt to small rinks in North America with his smarts and stick-handling.

• Round 5, No. 156 overall:

Justin Poirier, forward



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Undersized player at 5-8 and 185 pounds but a big-time scorer. Has a quick release on his shot. Played for Baie-Comeau in the QMJHL and became the first 17-year-old in the Q to score 50 goals since Sidney Crosby.

Some scouts believed he could go as high as the second round after scoring 51 goals in 68 games this season, then adding 18 in 17 games in the playoffs. Played for Canada's U18 team in the Hlinka Gretzky Cup.

▪ Round 6, No. 168 overall:

Timur Kol, defenseman

In Kol, the Canes picked another D-man with size – 6-4 and 204 pounds. The Moscow native, one of the youngest players eligible for the 2024 draft, is both a physical type and can apply defensive pressure but also has a capable shot from the point.

Kol played two KHL games with Avangard Omsk but spent much of last season playing junior hockey in the VHL and MHL. Ranked 36th among EU skaters by NHL Central Scouting

▪ Round 6, No. 184 overall:

Roman Shokhrin, defenseman

Speaking of adding a defenseman with size, Shokhrin is slightly bigger than Kol at 6-5, 205 pounds. Like Kol, he spent much of the 2023-24 season in the MHL junior league in Russia with Loko-76 Yaroslavl, but also got in eight KHL games.

The scouting report on Shokhrin: a tremendous skater who handles the puck well in the D zone and can make the good first pass.

▪ Round 6, No. 188 overall:

Fyodor Avramov, forward

Listed at 6-3 and 190 pounds, Avramov was ranked 53rd among EU skaters by NHL Central Scouting. Said to be strong on the puck, on the forecheck and around the net, he used his big shot to produce 44 points in 49 games for the MHL's Kapitan Stupino, which also produced Pyotr Kochetkov.

▪ Round 7, No. 220 overall:

Andrey Krutov, forward

A player with good mobility and play-making ability, the 5-11, 174-pound left wing had 50 points (21 goals, 29 assists) in 41 games with Chaika Nizhny Novorod of the MHL last season.



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The Athletic

NHL free agency 2024: What's every team's biggest need ahead of July 1?

By The Athletic NHL Staff

NHL free agency is less than 24 hours away, slated to open at noon ET on Monday

Who'll be shopping for what when the bell rings? The Athletic asked its NHL staff.

Here's each team's biggest need.

Anaheim Ducks

Top-six scorer and top-four defenseman

General manager Pat Verbeek laid out his offseason shopping list after the season ended, and the Ducks need some upgrades if they want to make a push to at the very least play consequential games next spring. Frank Vatrano scored 37 goals, but their next highest returning goal producer was Troy Terry with 20, and you can't expect Vatrano to match last season's output. Convincing free agents that the Ducks are ready to start moving past their rebuild won't be easy, but there's \$33 million of cap flexibility to work with. The Ducks may not want to go long-term on a right-handed shot on defense, but there's a hole to fill. Up front, Verbeek convinced Alex Killorn to come west after a long run with Tampa Bay. Could he somehow do the same for Steven Stamkos? They won't want to get into the high-stakes Sam Reinhart poker game if he's in play, though. — Eric Stephens

The Ducks need a top-six winger — which free agents or trade targets might they consider?

Boston Bruins

Center

If Steven Stamkos has not re-signed with the Lightning, the Bruins should be at the front of the line. Stamkos has the presence and the pedigree to improve the Bruins at center. He can also play wing. Stamkos would improve the Bruins' offense instantly. The Bruins could also look at Elias Lindholm as a Patrice Bergeron-like two-way center. Other options include Chandler Stephenson and Max Domi. — Fluto Shinzawa

Bruins post-draft free agency primer: Spending spree is coming, but on what? 'They're all over the place'

Buffalo Sabres

Top-six forward

The Sabres' only NHL addition during draft weekend was Beck Malenstyn, who projects as a fourth-liner. Buying out Jeff Skinner creates another hole in a forward depth chart that already needed an upgrade. No-trade clauses have made trades difficult for general manager Kevyn Adams, so free agency could end up being the likeliest path to addressing this need. Steven Stamkos would be a dream

target, but Tyler Toffoli, Jake DeBrusk and Patrick Kane could be other options. — Matthew Fairburn

Sabres free-agent targets: Steven Stamkos and other top-six forwards who could fit

Calgary Flames

Defensive help

Even if Oliver Kylington gets re-signed, the Flames could use a defender (particularly on the right side) to shore up their defense. Expect them to be linked to names like Tyson Barrie and Matt Dumba over the next few days. — Julian McKenzie

Carolina Hurricanes

To stop the bleeding

The Hurricanes have so far re-signed only two of their pending unrestricted free agents — Jalen Chatfield and Spencer Martin — and have several big names seemingly heading out the door. That makes for a lot of work. Carolina has just four NHL defensemen signed right now, and the potential losses of Jake Guentzel (whose rights were traded to the Lightning on Sunday), Teuvo Teravainen, Jordan Martinook and Stefan Noesen make for holes up front. The Hurricanes could use assets from a Martin Necas trade to plug two or three spots, but Carolina will probably be looking for some depth additions and perhaps a bigger name or two in free agency. — Cory Lavarlette

Chicago Blackhawks

Top-six winger to play with Connor Bedard

The Blackhawks obviously have a lot of holes to fill, perhaps including a defensive partner for Kevin Korhinski and a backup goalie. But the lowest-scoring team in the league last season desperately needs some help up top for Connor Bedard, who spent most of last season playing with Philipp Kurashev and a rotating cast of left wings that included Rem Pitlick, Nick Foligno and Anthony Beauvillier. Chicago has the cap space to vastly overpay a free agent but doesn't want to hand out any term beyond two or three years. The Blackhawks had interest early on in Jake Guentzel, but general manager Kyle Davidson this week seemed to be trying to temper fans' expectations. Old friend Teuvo Teravainen could be an option for the top six, but it's possible a healthy Taylor Hall returning will be the Blackhawks' biggest "addition." — Mark Lazerus

What we're hearing: Blackhawks' trade, draft, contracts

Colorado Avalanche

Secondary scoring

The Avalanche's biggest need entering free agency is secondary scoring behind the elite top of the lineup (Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Cale Makar). With the



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uncertainty around Gabriel Landeskog and Valeri Nichushkin, and Jonathan Drouin still unsigned heading toward free agency, the Avs could use a scoring winger. But figuring out the cap situation to make that work will be complicated because of Landeskog and Nichushkin. — Jesse Granger

Columbus Blue Jackets

Veterans

The Blue Jackets aren't likely to go big-game hunting on July 1, but new general manager Don Waddell wants to add a veteran presence on both ends of the ice. One name to keep in mind is Sean Monahan, who will likely hit the market after splitting last season between Montreal and Winnipeg. It might help that Monahan and Jackets forward Johnny Gaudreau remain tight from their many seasons together in Calgary. The Jackets may also be in the market for a third-pairing defenseman, especially if they decline to extend a qualifying offer to Jake Bean. — Aaron Portzline

Dallas Stars

Right-shot defensemen

The Stars ended the season with nothing but question marks on their right side, with Jani Hakanpää missing extended time due to injury, Nils Lundkvist falling out of favor with the coaching staff again (perhaps permanently) and Chris Tanev a pending unrestricted free agent. Yes, Miro Heiskanen can play on the right side, and it may be something the Stars need to continue, but even with that, they need at least one true top-four defenseman, whether they tap into the free-agency market or gauge the trade winds. — Saad Yousuf

Detroit Red Wings

Top-six winger

Detroit hasn't given up on trying to keep Patrick Kane, but whether it's him or someone else, the Red Wings have a hole for a scoring forward high in the lineup. Kane was a big source of offense last season, so there is real incentive for Detroit to figure something out with the future Hall of Famer. If not him, perhaps Jonathan Marchessault or Steven Stamkos (if either make it to market) would be fits for a team that came close last season to snapping an eight-year playoff drought. — Max Bultman

The Red Wings could use Patrick Kane but might need to replace his offense in free agency. (Gregory Shamus / Getty Images)

Edmonton Oilers

Middle-six forwards

The Oilers are set at the top of their forward ranks with some combination of Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl (provided he's back), Zach Hyman and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins making up the first line. But that quartet are four of just seven forwards under contract, plus restricted free agent Dylan Holloway. The Oilers have a decent chance to bring back their third line from the Stanley Cup Final — Adam Henrique, Connor Brown and Mattias Janmark. Even if all three pending unrestricted free agents do return, though, they could use another addition. Viktor Arvidsson is someone they've been linked to and is set to hit the market. The Oilers

are weakest at right wing, so he'd be a good fit provided he can stay healthy. — Daniel Nugent-Bowman

Who stays? Who goes? Starting with Draisaitl, the Oilers have plenty to address

Florida Panthers

Defensive depth

The champs are in good shape with a top pair of Aaron Ekblad and Gustav Forsling, but there's work to do behind them, especially if Brandon Montour signs elsewhere. Re-signing pending unrestricted free agent Oliver Ekman-Larsson would be a start, and Florida's track record of turning also-rans into real contributors is impressive, but they need a piece or two. — Sean Gentile

Los Angeles Kings

Middle-six scoring winger

The Kings' blueprint has been more about depth than star power, but that's only gotten them so far. There isn't an appetite to pull back and move into a retool, but the trade of Pierre-Luc Dubois and an increase in the cap has given them some financial flexibility they didn't have last season to beef up a couple of positions. A reunion with Tyler Toffoli has been a popular topic, and the veteran has turned into an import scorer for a few teams. On defense, Brandt Clarke is poised to step in for the departing Matt Roy, but the Kings can upgrade from Andreas Englund on the left side. Ryan Suter could be a low-cost option after being bought out by Dallas. Or could there be another reunion with an ex-King? Alec Martinez, anyone? (Unless he's bound for retirement.) — Eric Stephens

Minnesota Wild

Top-six winger

There's no doubt the Wild will be relying on internal improvement from Marcus Johansson, Freddy Gaudreau and Ryan Hartman after down years, but they also need to look for a top-six winger in free agency or trade, despite their limited cap space and flexibility. Here's the problem: They want to sign somebody to a one- or two-year deal, which immediately takes them out of the running for top free agents. David Perron could be a fit. Patrick Kane would be a dream. They could also pursue a trade for somebody like Columbus' Patrik Laine if the Blue Jackets would eat half of his \$8.7 million cap hit for the final two years of his contract. — Michael Russo

Patrick Laine? Top-6 winger in free agency? Here's what's ahead for the Wild this offseason

Montreal Canadiens

Short-term forward help

The Canadiens don't want to overcommit to an older player who might wind up blocking the young players in their deepening prospect pipeline, but they would like to be competitive next season and view the forward position as one that could use some immediate help to that end. The free-agent market is one way to address it, though it is generally difficult to find effective free agents willing to take shorter contracts. The Canadiens still have young defensemen available on the trade market after striking out



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on that front at the draft, so there are different avenues available to them here. — Arpon Basu

Nashville Predators

Difference-making forward

Two of the most enticing possibilities, Sam Reinhart and Steven Stamkos, may not actually be attainable. Chandler Stephenson could be a nice pickup — and has history with Barry Trotz. Signing him would allow Ryan O'Reilly to move down the lineup and give the Preds some actual depth down the middle. That doesn't address the need for a dominant No. 1 center, but that's probably going to require a trade of major significance. — Joseph Rexrode

New Jersey Devils

Defenseman

The Devils moved John Marino at the draft. They're rumored to be in on the Hurricanes' Brett Pesce, as well as the Jets' Brenden Dillon. Either would go a long way to shoring up a defensive core that is promising but young. New Jersey could also look to add at wing. — Peter Baugh

New York Islanders

Top-six forward

But they'll only get one by trading someone off the roster. The Islanders have less than \$6 million in cap space to work with and still a few holes on the edges of their roster. To really get in the game on a player who could play alongside Mat Barzal and Bo Horvat, general manager Lou Lamoriello will have to move out some money first. — Arthur Staple

New York Rangers

Top-six wing

The Rangers have long been looking for a fit alongside Chris Kreider and Mika Zibanejad on the top line. Jack Roslovic was not the answer after coming in at the deadline. New York has some short-term cap flexibility, but general manager Chris Drury also has to plan ahead for next summer, when Igor Shesterkin and Alexis Lafrenière are both due for big raises. What happens with Jacob Trouba in the coming days will go a long way in determining the Rangers' cap space. — Peter Baugh

What we're hearing: Rangers' Trouba trade plans, free agency

Ottawa Senators

Right-shot defenseman

Earlier this week, Ottawa's biggest need would have been in goal, but the Senators addressed that by acquiring Linus Ullmark from Boston. Now the priority for general manager Steve Staios is to land a right-shot defenseman to play in the top four. Staios could try to target the likes of Matt Roy, Sean Walker, Brandon Montour or Alexandre Carrier, who are slated to become unrestricted free agents on Monday. Failing that, he could potentially move one of his left-shot defensemen — such as a Jakob Chychrun or Erik Brannstrom — to try and facilitate landing a righty on the back end. — Ian Mendes

What a perfect week would look like for Senators GM Steve Staios

Philadelphia Flyers

Power-play help

There's a decent chance that the Flyers don't do anything when the free-agency period opens up. They certainly aren't going to be in the market for a major addition. Still, after finishing dead last in the league in power-play percentage for the third season in a row, perhaps there's a cheap forward option who could help give that part of their game a boost. A net-front presence, in particular, is something that they lacked last season with a man advantage. — Kevin Kurz

Pittsburgh Penguins

Bottom-six forward help

The Penguins aren't in a great spot. They badly need depth scoring, among other things, but only have around \$7 million in cap space. Kyle Dubas said on Friday that he won't be handing out long-term deals in free agency. The Penguins are hoping to catch lightning in a bottle in a couple of one-year deals. — Josh Yohe

San Jose Sharks

Power-play quarterback

The good news is the Sharks have \$31 million available in cap space, per CapFriendly, and no high-priced extensions to work out. The bad news is they're not the most attractive NHL destination these days. Now, the possibility of Macklin Celebrini and Will Smith taking flight as their top two centers might change that dynamic, but even general manager Mike Grier conceded that he may have to overpay for a significant free agent. Fabian Zetterlund scored 24 goals this past season and William Eklund has the potential to level up, but the Sharks need scoring along with a puck-moving power-play quarterback. Grier is open to offering term but wants to keep a deal to four years. Perhaps Sean Walker or Shayne Gostisbehere are targets on defense. It's not a great UFA market beyond the top forwards and they'll want max term. But Tyler Bertuzzi could hit the market. Jeff Skinner was just bought out. Or what about an Anthony Duclair reunion? — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken

Goal scoring

The Kraken's third season was a huge setback mostly because they weren't able to manufacture goals consistently. This is a structurally sound, hard-working team with a fair bit of depth, but it's a lineup that's lacking in elite talent. Some top-six support will be necessary if Seattle is going to rebound back into the mix in the Pacific Division next season. There are a variety of options for the Kraken to consider, including recently bought-out forward Jeff Skinner, who previously worked with Kraken general manager Ron Francis in Carolina. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

Strategic second-wave pickup

When Blues GM Doug Armstrong was discussing the start of free agency on Monday, he said that his team probably wouldn't get serious until Tuesday or Wednesday. It's not



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that the Blues don't have holes to fill. It's just that while in a retool, they're not looking to make any significant upgrades in free agency. So they're going to let the first wave of players pick their spots and then find out if any reasonably priced ones fit into their plan. If the team does go shopping, a third-line center or a bottom-six forward with some grit is likely on their list. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

Scoring forward

The Lightning found a way to clear cap space with the Mikhail Sergachev and Tanner Jeannot trades. Now management has to find a way to carefully use it. The biggest need is a scoring forward — whether it's Jake Guentzel, whose rights were acquired Sunday, or Steven Stamkos returning or another bonafide goal scorer. Swapping Sergachev for JJ Moser may help cut costs, but it takes away a reliable source of offense from the blue line. That puts even more emphasis on the forward group, so Tampa Bay can't afford to lose Stamkos or comparable production. — Shayna Goldman

The Lightning aren't the only team that think Steven Stamkos would look good in their colors right now. (Rich Storry / Getty Images)

Toronto Maple Leafs

Defense!

The Leafs took a step in this direction when they acquired the negotiating rights to Chris Tanev during Day 2 of the draft. Assuming they sign him, Tanev will check off one box for the Leafs on the right side. Ideally, they would like to add another right-shooting defender to play in the top four and potentially a third-pairing type on top of that (if the money is there). General manager Brad Treliving is determined to overhaul the defense above all else this summer. — Jonas Siegel

What we're hearing about the Leafs' plans for free agency, Marner

Utah HC

More help on the blue line

This may sound counterintuitive given that Utah made two big adds on the blue line Saturday, trading for Mikhail Sergachev and John Marino, and also signed Juuso Valimaki and Michael Kesselring to extensions in the past few days — good work considering Utah had zero defensemen under contract at the start of the week — but if the team can add another piece in free agency, it will be a serious playoff threat in its first season in its new home. Brandon Montour maybe? Given how aggressive Utah was Saturday, nothing is off the table anymore. — Eric Duhatschek

Vancouver Canucks

Dynamic top-line forward

The Canucks finished the season as a top-10 offense, but goals and shots and quality five-on-five looks were incredibly difficult for this club to come by once the playoffs began. If they are going to meet their ambitions next season and become an inner-circle contender, adding serious offensive punch into the top-six mix is required. The club is expected to pursue Jake Guentzel aggressively if he hits the open market but will have to pivot if he's headed elsewhere or doesn't make it to market after having his rights traded to the Lightning on Sunday. It's probably not enough, after all, for this club to merely land a quality top-six forward. If the Canucks are going to make sure they're bringing more than a knife to a gunfight the next time they encounter the likes of Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl in a playoff series, a star-level scoring forward is going to be required. — Thomas Drance

Vegas Golden Knights

Top-six winger

Whether it's through extending this past season's leading scorer and pending UFA Jonathan Marchessault or turning to the market, the Knights need a top-six winger. As of now, Vegas is great at center but has only Mark Stone and Ivan Barbashev as proven top-six options under contract. Acquiring Alexander Holtz in a trade with New Jersey on Saturday helps, but they'll still need to add at least one more winger. — Jesse Granger

How might the Golden Knights fill their biggest offseason roster hole?

Washington Capitals

Defensive depth

General manager Brian MacLellan, who'd already traded for Pierre-Luc Dubois, said ahead of the draft that he was hoping to add another winger and a veteran goalie. Andrew Mangiapane and Logan Thompson wound up fitting the bill perfectly. The other element MacLellan mentioned that he hasn't yet addressed is someone to change the defensive mix. A fresh left-shot defenseman in the third pair would look great. — Sean Gentile

Winnipeg Jets

Defense

Winnipeg has one star defenseman in Josh Morrissey and a top-four capable partner for him in Dylan DeMelo. Beyond that, there's Dylan Samberg, who might be ready to attempt top-four minutes; Neal Pionk, who's struggled in that role; and a collection of possibilities that include prospects Elias Salomonsson and Ville Heinola, third-pairing-capable veteran Nate Schmidt and Logan Stanley. Winnipeg needs someone to replace Brenden Dillon, who's expected to sign elsewhere, at minimum. Matt Roy would be the dream unrestricted free agent, and Brett Pesce is another player whose style meets the Jets' needs. Otherwise, Winnipeg's options are on the trade market or on players who make it past July 1 free agency. — Murat Ates



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Lightning sign Jake Guentzel to 7-year deal after trading 3rd-rounder to Hurricanes for his rights

By The Athletic Staff

By Chris Johnston, Pierre LeBrun and Josh Yoh

The Tampa Bay Lightning got a jumpstart on free agency Sunday by acquiring Jake Guentzel's rights from the Carolina Hurricanes less than 24 hours before the winger was set to hit the open market.

The Lightning locked Guentzel down with a seven-year deal carrying a \$9 million average annual value, the team announced Monday.

The fact that the Lightning sent a 2025 third-round pick back to Carolina to gain an early negotiating window was already a pretty good indication that they were confident they would be able to reach an agreement with Guentzel on a contract.

Guentzel was one of the top names available in this year's free-agent class — second on The Athletic's big board.

The two-time Stanley Cup winner scored 30 goals and 77 points in 67 games in 2023-24, splitting the season between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Hurricanes. He has 227 goals

and 491 points in 520 career games and 67 points in 69 career playoff games.

Carolina hoped to keep Guentzel, offering him an eight-year deal worth \$64 million earlier this week, but elected to move on when he didn't jump at that offer.

The Lightning's successful acquisition of Guentzel continues a pretty significant transformation of the team's roster. On Saturday, general manager Julien BriseBois made two cap-clearing moves, sending defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to Utah and forward Tanner Jeannot to the Los Angeles Kings while getting defenseman JJ Moser, prospect Conor Geekie and draft picks back in return.

BriseBois also announced that longtime captain Steven Stamkos would hit the free-agent market Monday, signaling the end of an era for the face of the franchise, who was drafted No. 1 by the Lightning in 2008.

Guentzel gives Tampa another top-six forward option to soak up some of the minutes and offense walking out the door with Stamkos.

2024 NHL Draft grades for every team: Best fits, analysis and what to know

By Corey Pronman

With the 2024 NHL Draft in the books, we conclude our coverage of this draft by way of draft grades. These grades are based on how I think the clubs did, based on my knowledge of the players selected.

The only way I can fairly and reasonably go about this exercise is to assign grades based on which team added the most by way of draft picks to the organization. I don't account for players acquired by trade, how well a player fits into the organization, or whether I think a team reached or got potential value on a pick. This is a ranking showing who got the most talent in the draft, divided by tiers represented by a letter grade. Teams are listed by their grade, but teams with the same grade are listed alphabetically. I realize this basically becomes highly correlated to draft slot and amount of picks. Your method may vary, and I realize there are other ways to analyze a draft performance. This is how I do it.

This file has a brief synopsis of the draft classes, but there are individual team files for all 32 clubs linked in this article for a more detailed breakdown of each draft haul.

San Jose Sharks: A+

San Jose got a lot accomplished this weekend for the future of their franchise. Obviously, they took the consensus No. 1 pick in Macklin Celebrini, who is a projected star No. 1 center. After Celebrini, though, they went to work. Dickinson, at 11, is a projected great NHL defenseman. On Day 2, they snagged up Igor Chernyshov and Leo Sahlin Wallenius in the second round; I think they can be legit NHL players on the wing and defense, respectively. I could see anywhere from two to four NHL regulars coming out of this class for San Jose, and real potential impact from those players.

Read the full analysis of San Jose's draft class [here](#).

Chicago Blackhawks: A

I'm a huge fan of Artyom Levshunov, and that's a large reason for the big grade on Chicago's draft. After Levshunov they went out and got a lot of forwards with well-rounded games. They added a lot of size and speed in this class. I don't know if they added tremendous natural skill up front, but if Boisvert hits you could get scoring out of him in the NHL. They acquired several players who could fill out their bottom six in time, and a potential star defenseman in Levshunov.

Read the full analysis of Chicago's draft class [here](#).

Anaheim Ducks: A-

Much will be made about Anaheim's pick of Beckett Sennecke at No. 3. His late growth spurt and trajectory remind me of Ryan Johansen's rise to No. 5. I like the player a lot and see some star upside even if he carries some risk in his projection. After Sennecke and Solberg, I thought they got some potential bottom-six forwards in Lucas Pettersson, Maxim Massé and Ethan Proczyszyn. I could see one NHL regular come from their Day 2 group to go with the two first-rounders I like a lot. This was a productive weekend for the Ducks as they continue a promising rebuild.

Read the full analysis of Anaheim's draft class [here](#).

Calgary Flames: A-

Calgary's draft will mostly be known for drafting its potential PP1 quarterback in Zayne Parekh, but I thought the Flames went to work after taking him, too. In the top three rounds,



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they chose players I like a lot. In particular, they drafted a lot of skill and a goalie in Kirill Zarubin, who I think has a lot of NHL traits. They also got one of my favorite later-round prospects in Hunter Laing. It would not surprise me to see two or three NHL regulars come from this class.

Read the full analysis of Calgary's draft class here.

Montreal Canadiens: A-

Montreal's grade is mostly about what it accomplished on Day 1 of the draft. The Canadiens acquired a potential star scoring winger in Ivan Demidov, and in Michael Hage a highly talented forward in his own right who could be a middle-six forward, or a top six if he truly hits. I had time for some of their Day 2 picks, in particular Aatos Koivu and Logan Sawyer, who I think have a chance to play. Ultimately this draft will likely come down to how good Demidov is. They have two potential star wingers now in him and Juraj Slafkovsky to build around.

Read the full analysis of Montreal's draft class here.

New Jersey Devils: A-

A major reason for the Devils' high grade was their 10th overall pick, Anton Silayev. I think Silayev could be a star two-way defenseman in the NHL. I did also like their pick of Mikhail Yegorov on day two. He may be the most purely talented goalie in the draft, and he has the potential to be a starting goalie in the NHL if he fixes some of his deficiencies.

Read the full analysis of New Jersey's draft class here.

Minnesota Wild: B+

Minnesota didn't make many picks in this class, but the picks they did make bring add a lot of talent to the prospect pipeline. Zeev Buium was one of my favorite players in this draft, and I think he has star potential. Ryder Ritchie and Aron Kiviharju have flaws and fell later than expected after being promising prospects earlier in their careers. They may miss, but they have the talent to score in the NHL if they add some elements to their game. Buium is the only sure thing in the class, but he's a heck of a player.

Read the full analysis of Minnesota's draft class here.

Ottawa Senators: B+

It's a tale of two picks in my view for this Ottawa draft. I adore Carter Yakemchuk — my No. 3 ranked player in the draft — because I think he has star upside. I knew Gabriel Eliasson was going in the second round, but I could never wrap my head around him being that type of prospect. He is a clear NHL athlete with a mean streak, but I saw next to no puck play this season and his mediocre Swedish U18 team could barely play him at times, even though he was often listed by his draft peers as "players they hated to play against" in combine interviews. This draft will revolve around how good Yakemchuk becomes and I think that bar could be high.

Read the full analysis of Ottawa's draft class here.

Seattle Kraken: B+

Seattle's first-round pick, Berkly Catton, is a true high-end talent up front and has some star upside for Seattle. Their

day two was less exciting for me. I like Julius Miettinen and could see him as a well-rounded top nine forward, potentially down the middle. I could never wrap my head about Nathan Villeneuve as a top-two-round pick, especially after the bounty scandal he got caught up in the OHL this season. Regardless, if they get two regulars from this draft and a play-driving top-line forward it's a successful weekend.

Read the full analysis of Seattle's draft class here.

Utah Hockey Club: B+

The Utah Hockey Club's grade doesn't reflect the trades they made, as it's purely about the talent acquired in the draft. As an aside, I'm a huge fan of the deals they made. By bringing Mikhail Sergachev and John Marino into a blue line that will soon have Dmitri Simashev and Maveric Lamoureux, Utah's defense could be quite terrifying given all the size and mobility that group will have. Focusing on the picks, Tij Iginla at No. 6 was a bit high for me, even though I do see him as a potential top-six wing in the NHL, and he wasn't too far behind that spot on my list. Utah's next three picks are highly competitive big men in Cole Beaudoin, Will Skahan and Tomas Lavoie, who all have clear, projectable paths to the NHL. Beaudoin looks like an all-day NHL forward, and those two defenders have real chances to make it too. Owen Allard is a speedster who was one of my favorites in this class too. I could see three NHL regulars coming from this group, with Iginla having a high chance of scoring a lot of goals in the league.

Read the full analysis of Utah's draft class here.

Carolina Hurricanes: B

As usual, Carolina traded down to acquire picks and got a fair amount of talent on day two. I had high grades on their first two picks, Dominik Badinka and Nikita Artamonov. In typical fashion for their last few drafts, the Hurricanes then took a lot of swing on skill or talented Russians who slid due to their nationality. Badinka and Artamonov are the only NHL players I see in this group, but it wouldn't surprise me if they found games from at least one other player in this class.

Read the full analysis of Carolina's draft class here.

Columbus Blue Jackets: B

Columbus' first two picks were premium athletes Cayden Lindstrom and Charlie Elick, who play hard but have varying questions on how high their offensive side is. Some scouts believe Lindstrom could be a star, and if they get that type of output then this draft will look quite rosier than where I have them graded. I think Elick and Lindstrom are NHL regulars and their third-round pick, Luca Marrelli, has a real chance to play games, too.

Read the full analysis of Columbus' draft class here.

New York Islanders: B

The Islanders did solid work at the draft table. Cole Eiserman has been a point of debate all season, but he still projects as a top-six wing. On day two they acquired two talented goalies in the mid rounds, and in the second round I could see one of Jesse Pulkkinen or Kamil Bednarik making it to the NHL. This draft has potential to generate a decent amount of NHL games, and a lot will depend on how Eiserman's development goes.



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Read the full analysis of the Islanders' draft class here.

St. Louis Blues: B

The Blues had a clear theme to their draft. They drafted size and skating and brought a bunch of top-end athletes into their farm system. Adam Jiricek, their first pick, looks like a top-four NHL defenseman. Ondrej Kos was trending to being a clear top-two-round pick earlier this season before he had health issues that derailed his season. Adam Jecho fell after being a touted player in recent years, but I see a path for him to the NHL. I don't think the stat line on a lot of these prospects will excite, but I could see multiple NHL regulars coming from the Blues' class. Matvei Korotky has a lot of potential as a seventh-round pick, too, with how well he played in the MHL playoffs.

Read the full analysis of St. Louis' draft class here.

Buffalo Sabres: B-

Buffalo's first two picks are players I think will have NHL careers. Konsta Helenius is a well-rounded forward with top-six potential, and Adam Kleber could be a fourth or fifth defenseman in the league. Brodie Ziemer is an easy player to like, even if the pure talent level in his game doesn't overly stand out. The draft class in itself is fine, but as I've stated before with Helenius, I do wonder how he fits in with all the other average to smaller-sized forwards Buffalo has drafted high.

Read the full analysis of Buffalo's draft class here.

Florida Panthers: B-

Given the limited draft capital Florida had coming into the day, I thought they did great work navigating with trades and acquiring some real prospects. Linus Eriksson projects as a legit NHL center, and Matvei Shuravim projects as an NHL defenseman. I think Simon Zether has a real chance to play games. Given how barren their farm system was coming into today, Florida leaving with several quality prospects was much needed.

Read the full analysis of Florida's draft class here.

Washington Capitals: B-

I've had a hard time wrapping my head around taking Terik Parascak at No. 17, but I liked Washington's second day a lot more. Cole Hutson, Leon Muggli, Ilya Protas, Eriks Mateiko and Nicholas Kempf all have legit chances to play games in the NHL.

Read the full analysis of Washington's draft class here.

Boston Bruins: C+

I liked what the Bruins did at the draft this season given how few picks they had. Dean Letourneau is full of potential. Even if there is a lot of uncertainty in how he'll perform at higher levels, he has the tools to be a top-six NHL forward if his development goes well. Jonathan Morello was one of my favorite mid-round picks. He is a clear NHL athlete along with Elliott Groenewold, and I could see one of them playing NHL games.

Read the full analysis of Boston's draft class here.

Detroit Red Wings: C+

Detroit's first-round pick, Brandsegg-Nygard, projects as a hard-to-play-against top-six winger. Their day two picks weren't that exciting to me. Max Plante and Ondrej Becher are very skilled forwards and have chances to play but have a long way to go in their development.

Read the full analysis of Detroit's draft class here.

Los Angeles Kings: C+

Liam Greentree is a very good prospect who has a chance to score in the NHL and be a legit middle-six winger. Carter George is a small goalie, but he had a very strong season in the OHL and at the U18s for Canada. It looks like he has a real chance to make it despite his frame.

Read the full analysis of Los Angeles' draft class here.

Nashville Predators: C+

Yegor Surin projects as a middle-six forward in the NHL, with a real chance to play down the middle and be a coach's favorite. On Day 2, I had time for where Nashville took Teddy Stiga and Hiroki Gojsic, but I never saw top-three-round tools from Viggo Gustafsson, even if he played a major role for Sweden's U18 team. I had heard the Miguel Marques hype all season but he seems like a dime-a-dozen skill type who skates well for me. If I'm wrong on one of those the assessment of this draft could change, but as of now Surin is the only player I'm excited about.

Read the full analysis of Nashville's draft class here.

New York Rangers: C+

The Rangers didn't have many picks, but their first-rounder Emery is a strong defenseman prospect who has the clear looks of a guy who will make a lot of stops in the NHL. They didn't pick again until 119, but rolled the dice on a couple of players who I think have a chance to make it and I thought they made good work of their limited draft capital.

Read the full analysis of New York's draft class here.

Philadelphia Flyers: C+

Jett Luchanko projects as an NHL center. No. 13 was a tad high for me, even though I knew plenty of scouts who had him around that range. He's a third-line center for my money, but I could see him become a 2C if a lot goes right. Jack Berglund, Philly's next pick, has a lot of NHL traits and could be a bottom-six forward, too. I couldn't get there with the Spencer Gill hype this season, even though I knew some scouts who liked him a lot. If I'm off on Luchanko and Gill, this class could be better than I've graded it.

Read the full analysis of Philadelphia's draft class here.

Vegas Golden Knights: C+

Trevor Connelly has been a much discussed prospect this season. He is very talented but he has some concerns, which we've documented. Your opinion on this pick will vary, and we'll see how it plays out with time. I liked the goalie they took in the third round in Pavel Moysevich. I think he has a relatively clear path to becoming a backup goaltender in the NHL or better.

Read the full analysis of Vegas' draft class here.

Colorado Avalanche: C



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Colorado didn't pick until No. 38 but got one of my top-rated goalies in Ilya Nabokov. The Avalanche picked a lot in this draft, but without many high picks, it's hard to truly move the needle in terms of getting legit NHL talent. Some of their late picks have chances to make it, and we'll see how their development goes, but I think their draft mostly will revolve around Nabokov's future play.

[Read the full analysis of Colorado's draft class here.](#)

Edmonton Oilers: C

Edmonton made an aggressive play to come up to get Sam O'Reilly. I didn't have him rated as high as the Oilers did, but if, like a lot of London players before him, he continues to develop well, I could see myself revising that stance a year from now if he has a big offensive season in the OHL. Eemil Vinni is the most athletic goaltender in the draft and has a real chance to play games for an organization that desperately needs goaltender talent in the system.

[Read the full analysis of Edmonton's draft class here.](#)

Advertisement

Pittsburgh Penguins: C

The Penguins didn't pick until No. 44. I like their two second-round pick in Harrison Brunicke and Tanner Howe. Neither look like NHL locks by any means, but I can see them getting a fair number of NHL games.

[Read the full analysis of Pittsburgh's draft class here.](#)

Toronto Maple Leafs: C

I like Ben Danford, Toronto's pick at No. 31. I wasn't sure I would have done it at 31, and I didn't talk to many scouts before or after the draft who would have either. I think he will play in the NHL though and plays a style of game that's easy to like. They didn't pick again until the fourth round, so this class will mostly be about whether Danford is a third- or second-pair defenseman in the league. Their fifth-round pick Miroslav Holinka's toolkit is quite intriguing though to get at 151.

[Read the full analysis of Toronto's draft class here.](#)

Dallas Stars: C-

Dallas didn't have many draft picks in this class, and their first-round pick, Emil Hemming, is a player who I could never

come around on all season at that point in the draft. He's clearly a talented goal-scorer, but I think he has to work on a lot of aspects of his game to become a full-time NHL player.

[Read the full analysis of Dallas' draft class here.](#)

Winnipeg Jets: C-

Winnipeg's draft class didn't overly excite me. I know some people like Alfons Freij a lot and he's certainly talented, but I had concerns about his hockey sense and I don't think he's a sure thing to be an NHL defenseman, even if he has some clear NHL traits. The Jets' later picks have some varying chances to play games, but I could see this class not produce one full-time regular too.

[Read the full analysis of Winnipeg's draft class here.](#)

Tampa Bay Lightning: D

The Mikhail Sergachev trade isn't reflected in the grade, as this is purely about talent drafted this weekend. As an aside, I do like the prospect they acquired in Conor Geekie. Geekie ended his WHL career on a high note, being one of the top forwards in the league and was a top player for Canada's U20 team. He's always been a big center with very good offensive skills, but what I've liked about Geekie's progression is that he's developed more of a physical edge. He uses his big body to get to the net and has shown a lot of off-puck value. His skating has been and remains a concern and despite his offensive output this year, I don't see a true elite stick and brain in his game. He projects as a two-way third-line center in the NHL with a chance to be a 2C. Tampa otherwise didn't pick until 118, so it's hard to get excited about that type of draft class even if they did have a number of later picks. Hagen Burrows would be my favorite from that group. I could see him becoming a bottom-six forward in the NHL.

[Read the full analysis of Tampa Bay's draft class here.](#)

Vancouver Canucks: D

Vancouver didn't have many picks and didn't pick until 93, so I'm sure Canucks fans were prepared that this was highly unlikely to be an exciting draft class. Their first two picks in Melvin Fernström and Riley Patterson are talented, but they aren't sure things to make it due to their skating. We'll see how many games they get from this group, but the odds are against them.



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Hurricanes take 6 Russians among 10 second-day picks at NHL Draft

By Cory Lavalette

LAS VEGAS — It was a weekend of trades for the Carolina Hurricanes — just not the big, splashy ones many expected.

The Hurricanes and new GM Eric Tulsky jumped around the draft board throughout two days at Sphere in Las Vegas, making three draft pick trades during the weekend and accumulating extra selections.

The trading started at the end of Friday's first round when Carolina sent pick No. 27 to the Chicago Blackhawks for a pair of second round selections, Nos. 34 and 50.

Armed with three selections in the second round, the Hurricanes sent the last of those, No. 60, to old GM Don Waddell and Columbus for picks No. 69 in Round 4 and No. 133 in the fifth.

Carolina then traded with Chicago again, dealing pick No. 90 for the Blackhawks' third round pick in 2025. Since Chicago is still in a full-blown rebuild, that pick figures to be in the late 60s to early 70s next year.

"A lot of it is just the conversations ahead of time," Darren Yorke, Hurricanes assistant general manager and head of amateur scouting, said of how the team decides when to move down in the draft. "We have a good idea of where our players could be selected and where other teams are picking and how many other picks they may have throughout the draft. So we're having conversations to really make sure that we can maximize our draft chart as best we can."

About those draft picks: The Hurricanes selected five defensemen and five forwards while using six picks on Russians.

"It really just depends on how the list goes," Yorke said of selecting six Russians — Carolina used five of its 10 picks last year on Russians as well, "and the way it went this year, it ended up being a lot of players from Russia."

Here's a rundown of Carolina's 10 draft picks on Saturday.

2 (34). Dominik Badinka, D

6-foot-3, 185 pounds

Malmö (SHL)

NSJ rank: 45

The right-handed Badinka established himself as a regular in the Swedish Hockey League last season, scoring a goal with three assists in 33 games with Malmö.

Badinka — whose big smile and flowing locks give him a resemblance to actor Timothée Chalamet — said he likes watching another big, right-handed blueliner.

"I'm a big fan of Brent Burns," Badinka said minutes after he was drafted. The fresh-faced Badinka said, however, he's not quite ready to grow a Burns-esque beard. "It's not growing now," he said with a laugh. "But maybe in 10 years."

Badinka has proven to be adaptable, switching from forward to defense at 14 years old and playing in his home country of Czechia, Finland and Sweden over the last three years.

The Hurricanes were glad they were still able to get Badinka after trading down.

"We saw a situation where we made a bet, and it worked out great for us," Yorke said. "So we were able to get Badinka and get some more ammo for later in the draft."

Yorke said Badinka's ability to shut down opponents and move the puck out of the defensive zone quickly meshes with Carolina's style of play.

"Eighteen years old playing in a hard league and the ability to play fast and really end plays off the rush, I think that's something that you look at how the game is playing and how we want to play," Yorke said. "You've got to be able to play fast defensively."

2 (50). Nikita Artamonov, L

5-foot-11, 187 pounds

Nizhny Novgorod (KHL)

NSJ rank: 47

Artamonov seemed like the type of player who would wind up being selected by Carolina, and the Hurricanes were able to get him in the middle of Round 2 despite many grading him as a first-round talent. The highly skilled Russian played last season in the KHL and scored seven goals with 23 points as an 18-year-old.

"He's playing in a very good league, and it's very challenging to produce the way he did," Yorke said. "So you have this incredibly energy-driven player that can play a bunch of different styles. He can get in on the forecheck, he can go and make plays."

"So look at how we play and how aggressive we play, and that's the style that fits incredibly well. And then you add the skill level on top of it. So I think it's great for us that we were able to pick up a talented player that also likes to play hard and fast."

The Hurricanes selected defenseman Nolan Fransen in the third round of the 2024 NHL Draft. (Cory Lavalette / North State Journal)

3 (69). Noel Fransen, D

6 feet, 183 pounds



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Farjestad Jr. (Swedish Jr.)

NSJ rank: 88

Carolina took its second defenseman of the draft by drafting Fransen out of Sweden. Fransen saw time in Sweden's top league last year after leading the country's junior league in goals and points by a defenseman.

"I want to bring offense to the D corps," Fransen said after being drafted. "That's mostly what I want to bring to Carolina. ... Great team. It has a lot of star players. It will be tough to get onto the team, but I will do everything to play there one day and lift the Cup."

He's a teammate of Joel Nystrom, a defenseman Carolina took in the seventh round in 2021.

"(He's) an incredibly offensively gifted player (who was) able to do almost what he wanted when he's playing the Swedish junior league," Yorke said.

The Hurricanes selected defenseman Alexander Siryatsky in the fourth round of the 2024 NHL Draft. (Cory Lavallette / North State Journal)

4 (124). Alexander Siryatsky, D

6-foot-2, 159 pounds

Magnitogorsk Jr. (MHL)

NSJ rank: Not ranked

Siryatsky has some weight to put on, but the Russian defenseman blossomed in his draft season.

Yorke said, "The development that he had over the last 12 months is incredible. ... The higher-end offensive thinking that he showed has been great."

Siryatsky had five goals and 19 points in 36 games in the MHL and played three games with the KHL squad last season.

"He was just excited he could be drafted," Hurricanes scout Oleg Smirnov said while translating for Siryatsky. "He was waiting for this."

5 (133). Oskar Vuollet, LW

5-foot-11, 173 pounds

Skelleftea Jr. (Swedish Jr.)

NSJ rank: Not ranked

Vuollet, one of the older first-year-eligible players in this year's draft, led his junior team in scoring with 29 goals — thanks to a lethal shot — and 61 points, and he also saw time in Sweden's top league.

"For two years in a row, all he's done is been able to produce at the junior level," Yorke said. "And then he gets called up for 15 games toward the end of the year and plays the exact same game against men. ... A really high-end offensive player."

The Hurricanes selected forward Justin Poirier in the fifth round of the 2024 NHL Draft. (Cory Lavallette / North State Journal)

5 (156). Justin Poirier, RW

5-foot-8, 185 pounds

Baie Comeau (QMJHL)

NSJ rank: 6

Poirier was one of the more intriguing players in the draft: A diminutive scorer who became the first 17-year-old since Sidney Crosby to score 50 goals in the Q.

Poirier still slid to the end of the fifth round, but he plans to prove people wrong.

"It's my first motivation," he said. "Since I was young, my size — I'm not the biggest boy, but I play big. So I'm going to try to prove them wrong, prove the other teams wrong and be happy to be here with Carolina."

Poirier's brother, Jeremie, is a defensive prospect with the Flames and has gone from third round pick to being close to reaching the NHL.

Justin, meanwhile, has all the skills — The Athletic's Corey Pronman says he has the fourth-best shot in the draft and top-20 puck skills — to one day do the same if he can overcome his size.

"There are very few people that have scored as many goals as he had over the last two years in the CHL during the draft year," Yorke said. "So (he's) probably a little undervalued because, unfortunately, he's just he's not very tall. But all he does is score."

6 (168). Timur Kol, D

6-foot-4, 204 pounds

Omsk Jr. (MHL)

NSJ rank: 9

Yorke said Kol — who is already built like an NHL defenseman — has similar attributes to Badinka.

"You've got to be able to play fast, you've got to be able to defend fast," Yorke said. "And being able to do what he did this season has been pretty special."

Kol climbed from his team's junior squad to Russia's second tier and even saw a pair of games in the KHL.

He said he likes to pattern his game in the offensive zone after current Hurricanes blueliner Dmitry Orlov while trying to play like Victor Hedman in the defensive zone. He was also familiar with the Hurricanes' recent history.

"I know that this club loves Russian players," he added.

6 (184). Roman Shokhrin, D

6-foot-5, 205 pounds

Yaroslavl (MHL)

NSJ rank: Not ranked

Shokhrin, like Timur, is another long defenseman with NHL size.

"He's an incredibly gifted skater, the mobility," Yorke said. "So even though they've got to play on the bigger ice, he was showing the ability to defend versus the rush. He has probably got a little bit more offensive game to him."

6 (188). Fyodor Avramov, LW



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6-foot-3, 190 pounds

Stupino (MHL)

NSJ rank: Not ranked

Avramov is one of the bigger forwards Carolina has drafted in recent years, but his biggest asset is his shot.

"Yeah, he can shoot," Yorke said. "He has a massive shot that he's able to get off and beat goalies clean from distance. And then put him in one-on-one space, to have those skills and be able to make guys miss at his size is really valuable."

7 (220). Andrey Krutov, LW

5-foot-11, 174 pounds

Nizhny Novgorod (MHL)

Krutov isn't as big but thinks the game at a high level while being able to be a scorer and distributor in the offensive zone.

"It's hard to really say whether he's a better shooter or a better playmaker, but he's able to see everything, make guys around him better," Yorke said. "He's got to get a little bit quicker. But really the value of how he sees the ice and the ability to make others around him better is probably his best asset."



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NHL Free Agency 2024: What you need to know for the Carolina Hurricanes

By Louis Fernandez

NHL free agency begins on Monday, July 1 at noon. The Carolina Hurricanes have been active already, trading the rights to forward Jake Guentzel to the Tampa Bay Lightning the day before and signing young players that have proven themselves since the end of the season.

Here's the list of free agents for the Carolina Hurricanes, both restricted and unrestricted.

As a reminder: restricted free agents are given qualifying offers from the organization, essentially one-year deals that depend on the player's salary from the previous year. While they can receive offer sheets from other teams, the Carolina Hurricanes ultimately have a lot of control in the situation. Unrestricted free agents are just that, unrestricted. Come noon on July 1 they can speak with and negotiate with any team they would like. This is where things stand for the Carolina Hurricanes going into free agency.

Carolina Hurricanes deals done before free agency

Jake Guentzel, forward (Rights traded to the Tampa Bay Lightning)

Carolina Hurricanes general manager Eric Tulsky announced a trade with the Tampa Bay Lightning, sending the rights to forward Jake Guentzel for a 2025 third round pick on Sunday.

Carolina received the two-time all-star and defenseman Ty Smith from the Pittsburgh Penguins in a big move on March 7 last season in exchange for forwards Michael Bunting, Ville Koivunen, Vasily Ponomarev, Cruz Lucius, a conditional 2024 first-round pick and a conditional 2024 fifth-round pick.

"The difference between 8 (million dollars) a year and 9.25 (million dollars) is a player, a bottom of your roster player, but it's a player, and the Hurricanes have a lot of players to sign between now and the start of training camp and really now and the next week," Gold said.

The 29-year-old had 25 points in 17 games during the regular season for the Hurricanes. He had four goals and five assists in 11 postseason games for the 'Canes as well. Carolina's season came to an end in the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs after falling in six games to the New York Rangers.

Jake Guentzel post Game 2 vs. New York Rangers

Hurricanes trade rights to Jake Guentzel to Lightning

Ryan Suzuki, forward

Carolina's first round pick in 2019, Suzuki signed a one-year, two-way contract in late-May. He will receive \$775,000 at

the NHL level and \$70,000 at the American Hockey League (AHL) level, with a \$90,000 guaranteed. The 23-year-old played 51 AHL games with the Springfield Thunderbirds in the 2023-24 season, finishing with 30 points (14 goals and 16 assists).

Jalen Chatfield, defenseman

Chatfield signed a three-year, \$9 million contract extension in June that will keep him with the Hurricanes through the 2026-27 season.

"Jalen has been an integral part of our blue line over the last two seasons and firmly established himself as an NHL defenseman," General Manager Eric Tulsky said after the signing. "His elite speed and tireless work ethic make him an incredibly dynamic player at both ends of the ice."

The 28-year-old netted 22 points in 72 games with the Hurricanes this season, with career-highs in goals, assists, points, blocked shots and ice time per game. His offensive production was among the highest for Hurricanes defensemen.

"That was great bit of business done at the very beginning," 99.9 The Fan's Adam Gold said this weekend, "dynamite signing."

Ty Smith, defenseman

Ty Smith was part of the Jake Guentzel trade in the middle of the 2023-24 season. In June he re-signed with the Hurricanes, a one-year, two-way contract for \$775,000 at the NHL level and \$200,000 at the AHL level with a \$275,000 guarantee.

"Ty is still developing as a player, but he possesses a keen ability to generate offense from the blue line," Tulsky said. "Our style of play relies on defensemen to pitch in offensively, and he is an experienced NHL player who can fill that role for our team."

The 24-year-old, had 43 points (9 goals and 34 assists) in 63 AHL games with Wilkes-Barre/Scranton in 2023-24, leading all Penguins skaters in assists and points. He also finished eighth in assists, tied for ninth in points among all AHL defensemen.

Eric Tulsky

New Hurricanes' general manager: 'We didn't hire ChatGPT to be the GM'

Carolina Hurricanes Restricted Free Agents

On June 30, the Hurricanes sent out qualifying offers to four restricted free agents and did not offer four others. Players have until 5 p.m. on July 15 to accept the offer. In the event the player declines the offer, arbitration could be an option depending on age and how long they've played in the NHL. If



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a restricted free agent does not receive a qualifying offer, they become an unrestricted free agent.

Seth Jarvis, forward (Received qualifying offer)

Jarvis was drafted in the first round in 2020 by the Carolina Hurricanes and should be a pillar of what the team wants to do moving forward. He was second on the team in points, 67, behind only Sebastian Aho. He was also second in goals scored and tied for second in assists. His non points in 11 Stanley Cup Playoff games ranked third, only behind Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov.

Martin Necas, forward (Received qualifying offer)

Necas re-signed a two-year deal in August 2022. The forward was fourth in points for the Carolina Hurricanes in the regular season (53 points in 77 games), but until the draft, Gold says Necas could have been playing for a different team in 2024-25.

"Trade Martin Necas," Gold said, "and depending on which team they were going to move him to, there were rumors of Columbus, they had the fourth pick, the Devils had the tenth pick, the Sabres had the eleventh, all three of those teams were interested."

Now that Guentzel's rights were traded to Tampa Bay, his offensive ability is important to the 'Canes immediate future.

"I think Martin Necas will be here and if they trade him, they will some how end up with another big bat in the middle of the lineup," Gold said. "I think Necas wants to be great, I would rather him be here than not be here."

Jack Drury, forward (Received qualifying offer)

Drafted in the second round of 2018 and signed before the 2021-22 season, Drury continues to grow with the Hurricanes. At 24 years old, he's coming off of his best season to date with a career-high in games played (74), goals scored (8) and assists (19).

Seth Jarvis

2024 NHL Draft: Plenty of trades, plenty of picks for the Carolina Hurricanes

Dylan Coghlan, defenseman (Received qualifying offer)

Re-signed a one-year contract on July 5, 2023. He played in one game this season.

Max Comtois, forward (Did not receive qualifying offer)

Signed on March 4, 2024, Comtois played five seasons with the Anaheim Ducks. He played just one game with the Hurricanes.

Blake Murray, forward (Did not receive qualifying offer)

A sixth-round pick by the Hurricanes in 2019, he was signed on May 24, 2021. Murray played 90 games in the ECHL in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 season with the Norfolk Admirals, Florida Everblades and Allen Americans.

Tuukka Tiekola, forward (Did not receive qualifying offer)

The 23-year-old played 52 games with the Chicago Wolves in 2022-23, netting 24 points, and with Lukko in his native

Finland in the 2023-24 season, where he finished with 18 points in 52 games.

Griffin Mendel, defenseman (Did not receive qualifying offer)

The 25-year-old played 116 games with the Chicago Wolves over two seasons, scoring 27 points. He played eight games this past season with the Norfolk Admirals in the ECHL.

PNC Arena

Hurricanes lease, development agreement offer PNC Arena area chance to 'come to life'

Carolina Hurricanes Unrestricted Free Agents

After the deals made prior to July 1, there are eight unrestricted free agents on the Carolina Hurricanes roster. Many of them have played big roles or have had memorable moments for the 'Canes in the past few years. Gold says it might be time to say goodbye to most of them.

"I'm not sure we're going to see more than two of their unrestricted free agents come back, it's going to be a very different looking roster next year," Gold said.

Jordan Martinook, forward

Martinook originally joined the Hurricanes through a trade with the team formerly known as the Arizona Coyotes, re-signing with Carolina on July 28, 2021. He's been consistent from the beginning, playing 82 regular season games in three of his six seasons with Carolina. His best two scoring campaigns have come recently, with back-to-back 30+ point seasons.

Gold says he's nervous the 31-year-old might look elsewhere though, even though he's been a huge part of the 'Canes culture.

"This is his last crack at being an unrestricted free agent and being able to get the most he can out of the market, and it's not going to be a huge number, but for him, the difference between say you know, 2.25, 2.5, 3.25, 3.5 (million dollars) or an extra year, that's significant," Gold said.

Teuvo Teravainen, forward

The 29-year-old Finn was originally acquired in a trade with the Chicago Blackhawks, but re-signed with the Hurricanes in 2019. He's had 50+ points in five of his eight seasons in Raleigh.

Stefan Noesen, forward

Signed as a free agent with the Hurricanes twice - in 2021 and 2022. The 31-year-old played in 78 and 81 regular season games in the past two seasons respectively. Noesen totaled 36 and 37 points in those two seasons as well.

Callahan Burke, forward

The Hurricanes received Burke through a trade with the Colorado Avalanche on October 10, 2023 in exchange for defenseman Caleb Jones. He was assigned to the Colorado Eagles in the AHL and played in one game for the Hurricanes

Brett Pesce, defenseman

A third round draft pick in 2013 by the Carolina Hurricanes, Pesce re-signed with the franchise in 2017. Carolina's top



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defenseman, Pesce's injury in Game 2 against the New York Islanders in the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs proved incredibly costly for the Hurricanes. He will be a major free agent target for teams around the league.

Brady Skjei, defenseman

Skjei joined the Hurricanes after a trade with the New York Rangers on February 24, 2020. In his four full season with the 'Canes, Skjei has played in at least 80 games three times. He had his highest point total this season (47) and second highest +/- of his career.

Like Pesce, he too will be highly sought after in free agency.

Tony DeAngelo, defenseman

DeAngelo played in just 31 games in the regular season in his second run with the Hurricanes. He signed a one-year deal with Carolina last offseason.

Antti Raanta, goalkeeper

The 35-year-old goalkeeper is Carolina's only free agent in net. He's spent three seasons with the Hurricanes. He last played a game for Carolina in February and was reassigned to the Chicago Wolves in March.



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2024 Free Agency Refresher

By Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, NC. - The NHL's offseason rolls right along, moving quickly from the draft in Las Vegas to the league's free agency period.

As most know, free agency is also more elaborate than just players without contracts being able to sign anywhere at 12 p.m. ET on Monday.

So, to start, here's a timeline of events, and subsequent questions pertaining to:

Sunday, June 30

5 p.m. - Qualifying offers are due to Restricted Free Agents (RFAs)

Who receives a qualifying offer?

RFAs who the team hopes to retain negotiating rights to. Qualifying offers are for one-year contracts. The minimum salary for the qualifying offer depends on the player's salary from the previous season.

Players have from 12 p.m. on July 1 until 5 p.m. on July 15 to accept the offer.

Which Carolina RFAs received a qualifying offer

Dylan Coghlan

Jack Drury

Seth Jarvis

Martin Necas

What happens if a qualifying offer is not made?

If a qualifying offer is not made, the player becomes an unrestricted free agent

The Canes did not issue qualifying offers to Max Comtois, Griffin Mendel, Blake Murray, and Tuukka Tiekola.

What if the player rejects the qualifying offer?

If the player rejects a qualifying offer, he remains a restricted free agent and arbitration could be an option, depending on service time.

Who can file for salary arbitration?

Players 18-20 must have four years of NHL experience before they are eligible. Someone who is 21 must have three, a player 22-23 years old must have two, and a player 24 or older must have one. A player earns a year of NHL experience by playing in at least 10 NHL contests.

7 p.m. - RFAs can be contacted for offer sheet discussions. Offer sheets cannot be signed prior to 12 p.m. on Saturday, July 1.

What is an offer sheet?

An RFA can receive an offer sheet from a team that is not the one that presently holds his rights. Should the player sign it, the team holding his rights has the ability to match it. If the team holding the player's rights elects not to match the offer, they may be entitled to compensation (draft picks) in exchange.

This is also the method by which Carolina obtained Jesperi Kotkaniemi from the Montreal Canadiens during the summer of 2021.

Monday, July 1

12 p.m. - The signing period opens for both Unrestricted Free Agents (UFAs) and Restricted Free Agents (RFAs). Additionally, players in the last year of their current contract (Andersen, Burns, Orlov, Slavin, etc.) become eligible to sign a contract extension.

What is the difference between an RFA and a UFA?

An RFA is a player who has completed his entry-level contract but does not have enough NHL service time to become a UFA. This player qualifies as an RFA when his contract expires.

Which players that played for the Canes last year are set to be UFAs?

Callahan Burke

Tony DeAngelo

Jordan Martinook

Stefan Noesen

Brett Pesce

Antti Raanta

Brady Skjei

Teuvo Teravainen

Jake Guentzel, who was a pending UFA, was traded to Tampa Bay on Sunday morning in exchange for a 2025 third-round pick.

What is a Group 6 (G6) free agent?

A player becomes a Group 6 UFA if they are 25, has completed 3 or more professional seasons, has a contract expiring, and has played fewer than 80 NHL Games. For goalies, this is 28 NHL games with more than 30 minutes of ice time.

The Canes do not have any Group 6 free agents this year.



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Canes Issue Qualifying Offers To Four

By Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, NC. - The Carolina Hurricanes shared on Sunday that they have issued qualifying offers to the following players, retaining the rights to the pending restricted free agents:

Dylan Coghlan

Jack Drury

Seth Jarvis

Martin Neca

Players can accept the qualifying offer from 12 p.m. ET on July 1 until 5 p.m. ET on July 15.

Of the four, Coghlan, Drury, and Necas are all arbitration-eligible.

The following players did not receive qualifying offers, making them unrestricted free agents ahead of the opening of tomorrow's free agency period:

Max Comtois

Griffin Mendel

Blake Murray

Tuukka Tiekola



Guentzel signs 7-year, \$63 million contract with Lightning

By NHL.com

Jake Guentzel signed a seven-year, \$63 million contract with the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday. It has an average annual value of \$9 million.

The 29-year-old forward was traded to the Lightning by the Carolina Hurricanes on Sunday for a third-round pick in the 2025 NHL Draft and could have become an unrestricted free agent at noon ET Monday. He had 77 points (30 goals, 47 assists) in 67 regular-season games for the Hurricanes and Pittsburgh Penguins last season, including 25 points (eight goals, 17 assists) in 17 games after he was acquired in a trade with the Penguins on March 7. Guentzel had nine points (four goals, five assists) in 11 Stanley Cup Playoff games for Carolina.

Selected by Pittsburgh in the third round (No. 77) of the 2013 NHL Draft, Guentzel has 491 points (227 goals, 264 assists)

in 520 regular-season games for the Hurricanes and Penguins and 67 points (38 goals, 29 assists) in 69 playoff games. He won the Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh in 2017.

Tampa Bay traded defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to the Utah Hockey Club on Saturday for defenseman J.J. Moser and forward Conor Geekie, a seventh-round pick in the 2024 NHL Draft and a second-round pick in 2025. The Lightning also sent forward Tanner Jeannot to the Los Angeles Kings for a fourth-round pick this year and a second-round selection in 2025.

Lightning general manager Julien BriseBois said Saturday that forward Steven Stamkos, who just played the last season of an eight-year, \$68 million contract (\$8.5 million average annual value) he signed June 29, 2016, will become a UFA when the market opens.



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Tampa Bay Lightning acquire the rights to Jake Guentzel on the eve of free agency

By STEPHEN WHYNO

The Tampa Bay Lightning got a head start on free agency by acquiring the rights to high-scoring winger Jake Guentzel on Sunday.

The Lightning sent a 2025 third-round draft pick to the Carolina Hurricanes. The move allows the Lightning to sign Guentzel before he hits the open market on Monday.

He is coming off scoring 30 goals this past season for the Hurricanes and Pittsburgh Penguins, his fourth time reaching that mark in an eight-year career that has included him getting to 40 twice. Guentzel, who turns 30 in October, won the Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh in 2017 and is nearly a point-a-game playoff performer in the NHL.

That means everything to the Lightning, who won it all back to back in 2020 and '21, reached the final in '22 and want to keep their contending window open as long as possible. To do so, general manager Julien BriseBois and his staff plotted to shift resources from a strong left side on defense to the forward group.

This is all part of that process. Trading defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to Utah and depth forward Tanner Jeannot to Los Angeles on Saturday cleared more than \$11 million in salary cap space over the next two seasons.

"We have this cap space (and) we can allocate it in different ways by either getting volume or quality," BriseBois said Saturday. "Now is that one player getting most of that cap space? Is it two players splitting it up? Three players splitting it up? It's too early to tell at this point."

Guentzel should take up a nice chunk of it, with some left over for the Lightning to sign another free agent, while also signing cornerstone defenseman Victor Hedman to a long-term contract extension.

Where that money will not be going, at least not right away, is toward re-signing Steven Stamkos, the longtime captain and face of the franchise who is expected to test free agency. BriseBois and Stamkos' agent, Don Meehan, confirmed Saturday their stances on reaching an agreement on a new contract had not changed.

"Steven's earned the right to test free agency," BriseBois said. "I didn't go to him last season to get a deal done. I did go to him quickly after this season, and I was taking a risk by doing that that we may end up here, and now here we are."

Tampa Bay became the second team to acquire the rights to a pending free agent, after Toronto sent a late pick in the 2026 draft to Dallas for the ability to negotiate exclusively with 34-year-old defenseman Chris Tanev.

"He's just an elite defensive player," Maple Leafs GM Brad Treliving said of Tanev, whom he previously signed when running the Calgary Flames. "Listen, I know the age he's at, but I think even in the last year he's shown he's one of the top shutdown defensemen, one of the top defensive players in the league."

New Jersey continued to rebuild its defense by getting Johnathan Kovacevic from Montreal for a 2026 fourth-round pick. The Devils traded John Marino to Utah on Saturday and are expected to target longtime Carolina defenseman Brett Pesce in free agency.

Buyouts initiated Sunday also will clear cap space.

The Buffalo Sabres finalized a buyout of forward Jeff Skinner's contract, ending the tenure of the highest-paid player on their roster. GM Kevyn Adams was unable to trade Skinner, who with a no-movement clause had full control over where he went.

Edmonton, which lost to Florida in seven games in the final, put goaltender Jack Campbell on unconditional waivers to buy out the rest of his contract. The \$25 million, five-year deal the Oilers signed him to in 2022 was a bust, with Campbell being sent to the minors this past season.

A couple of defensemen were also on buyout waivers Sunday: Winnipeg's Nate Schmidt and Columbus' Adam Boqvist. Brother Jesper Boqvist, formerly under contract with Boston, was among the players who also will become free agents after not receiving a qualifying offer, a list that includes Buffalo's Jacob Bryson, San Jose's Filip Zadina and Dallas' Nils Lundkvist — less than two years since the Stars traded a first-rounder to the Rangers for him.

Also not qualified were the four NHL players charged with sexual assault in the case involving members of Canada's 2018 world junior team: Philadelphia's Carter Hart, New Jersey's Michael McLeod and Cal Foote and Calgary's Dillon Dube. That was expected after the league did not give those players' teams any special exemption given the ongoing legal matter in London, Ontario.



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Best team fits for top NHL free agent Steven Stamkos

By Greg Wyshynski

Steven Stamkos is hitting the free agent market.

The first time we considered this possibility was back in 2016, before Stamkos signed an eight-year deal worth \$68 million with the Tampa Bay Lightning two days before July 1. But this time is different. Both Stamkos' agent Don Meehan and Lightning GM Julien BriseBois have indicated that the star forward is "going to July 1" this summer.

How we got here: Before the season, Stamkos publicly addressed his frustration over a lack of substantive contract extension talks with the Lightning. BriseBois said he wanted to wait until after the season to see what the Tampa Bay roster needed, and then would offer Stamkos something within the financial confines of addressing those needs.

The contract he offered Stamkos wasn't sufficient to re-sign him. Nor did it increase as the Lightning cleared out cap space and free agency neared. The general manager told Meehan that "it's the best interest of our organization to explore all options in the coming days, whether it be via trades or by getting into free agency."

On Sunday, Tampa Bay acquired the negotiating rights to Jake Guentzel from the Carolina Hurricanes (and subsequently agreed to a contract); Guentzel might become Stamkos' replacement in the lineup.

Where could Stamkos end up as a free agent? Here's a look at 16 possibilities, with the knowledge that other candidates are out there.

Top contender tier

Detroit Red Wings

The connections here are obvious: No general manager spent as many years generally managing Steven Stamkos as Steve Yzerman, the current head of hockey operations for the Red Wings. Derek Lalonde, the team's head coach, was Jon Cooper's right-hand man in Tampa Bay during their two Stanley Cup championships with Stamkos.

The fit here is obvious: The Red Wings desperately need more offensive pop beyond their top line and have a glaring hole at center behind Dylan Larkin.

The Red Wings have a significant amount of salary cap space -- \$32.77 million, before bringing back Patrick Kane -- and have cleared additional roster space with a (rather unpopular) trade that sent defenseman Jake Walman to San Jose. "We needed to move at least one contract to do some of the things we got to do," Yzerman said.

The Red Wings haven't made the playoffs since 2016, which means they've been outside the postseason picture for the entirety of the Yzerman era, which started in 2019. He has been aggressive in adding veteran UFAs in the past to get

them back. It doesn't get more aggressive than getting a Winged Wheel on Steven Stamkos' chest.

Steven Stamkos and Patrick Kane on the same line? This is like something you'd manufacture on EA Sports NHL 11.

Nashville Predators

I heard the Predators as a potential landing spot for Stamkos back in March. He fits the philosophy that general manager Barry Trotz has quickly established in Nashville: Playing with offensive pace under coach Andrew Brunette and augmenting a young roster with veteran stars who have won before. It started with Ryan O'Reilly, a Conn Smythe winner; it could continue with Stamkos, who has two Stanley Cup rings and 128 games of playoff experience.

He can slide in at center behind O'Reilly, but his biggest impact is probably on left wing, where Stamkos has played the majority of his time in Tampa Bay in recent seasons. They tried to address that hole on the left side by trading for Anthony Beauvillier and Jason Zucker at the trade deadline. Needless to say, Stamkos is more than a bandage.

Tennessee is a bit like Florida for Stamkos. No state income tax. A comparable media market. And we already know he looks good in the local garb.

Steven Stamkos has at least one Nashville-appropriate outfit to wear should he sign with the Predators. Matthew Maxey/Ikon Sportswire via Getty Images

Tampa Bay Lightning

His stuff is there.

OK, there are many other reasons Steven Stamkos would love to return to the Lightning, from finishing his career with a single franchise to pursuing a third Stanley Cup championship with a core of close teammates as their captain. He was outstanding for them last season: 40 goals, 41 assists in 79 games, before an equally outstanding postseason.

But BriseBois is a man of his word. He said there was a number he'd go to in order to re-sign Stamkos, while making the rest of the Lightning better. He has stuck to that number -- even after the Bolts created more cap space during the draft, BriseBois told ESPN that his offer to Stamkos didn't increase.

If the captain wants to return to this buccaneer ship, it's most likely for the terms on the table. Which also means swallowing a lot of pride in the process. But you can't count out a last-minute breakthrough, unless Tampa Bay has totally moved on from its star.

Vegas Golden Knights

To paraphrase Danny Ocean: "You didn't really think they were going to sit this one out, did you?"



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The Golden Knights never met an available star player they couldn't try to obtain. Combine that with the bad taste from a playoff disappointment, and owner Bill Foley will only encourage aggressive retooling.

Do they have cap space? Of course not. But that never stopped them from creating some to get what they want. And with Jonathan Marchessault apparently become the latest beloved player to hit the bricks in the name of big-name hunting, all eyes will be on Vegas on July 1.

Logical fits tier

Boston Bruins

In their first post-Patrice Bergeron and David Krejci season, the Bruins managed to thrive in the regular season with their center depth ... and then were summarily devoured in the playoffs in the middle. Stamkos obviously addresses that.

If it's on left wing, then Stamkos is a notable upgrade over Jake DeBrusk, who is an unrestricted free agent. Adding Stamkos would be a boost to the lineup -- and wouldn't a power play with Stamkos zinging passes to David Pastrnak be rather fun to watch?

The Bruins have roughly \$21.6 million in open cap space, although some of them is headed into Jeremy Swayman's bank account. Stamkos is a star; but for what the Bruins need, and who they are, is committing that kind of cash to a 34-year-old Stamkos better than committing it to a 29-year-old Elias Lindholm? (Or eventually to a 29-year-old Leon Draisaitl next summer... sorry, Edmonton, we'll quiet down.)

Carolina Hurricanes

After Guentzel spurned them, perhaps the Hurricanes fix their offensive issues with the player the Lightning jettisoned in favor of him?

Carolina has a glaring need for Stamkos on their second line, as either a center or a wing. They have an ongoing need for something to be a clutch performer in the postseason, where Stamkos has extensive experience. The Hurricanes could have over \$23 million in cap space with which to operate this summer, although they need to address their blue line and hand out new deals to Seth Jarvis and Martin Necas, provided the latter isn't traded.

If GM Eric Tulsky wants to make a splash in his first offseason at the helm, Stamkos is like a cannonball from the highest diving board.

Dallas Stars

GM Jim Nill basically has a sign on the front of the Stars' arena that reads: "WANTED: Respected veteran star forward, potential Joe Pavelski replacement."

Obviously, Stamkos' offensive game doesn't resemble that of Pavelski, from the physicality to the fearlessness in front of the crease. But his gravitas, hunger and postseason aptitude (101 points in 128 career games, including five goals in five games last postseason) would help fill that absence.

The Stars have just over \$19 million in open space and plenty business to handle -- especially on the back end -- but they do have the same lack of state income tax that Tampa Bay has used to its advantage.

Los Angeles Kings

The Kings have over \$19 million in projected cap space, although Quinton Byfield and Arthur Kaliyev need new deals. Stamkos bolsters their top-six group by either slotting in as a second-line center so Phillip Danault drops down a line, or skating on left wing across from Kevin Fiala on their second line.

Los Angeles remains in a win-now mode with Anze Kopitar and Drew Doughty nearing their twilight years. Stamkos would be an immediate boost to their lineup -- hey, maybe they could even beat the Oilers in the playoffs for once. If nothing more, Stamkos would find a new home where he could still use his jet ski.

New Jersey Devils

The Devils have a robust amount of cap space (over \$19 million) heading into free agency, although some of it is expected to be gobbled up by Carolina defenseman Brett Pesce and potentially another veteran blueliner. But if they can make the numbers work, Stamkos fits in nicely next to Jack Hughes on the Devils' top line, essentially filling the role that Tyler Toffoli had last season.

Obviously, they could use his experience and leadership in a room that could use a bit more of both. Stamkos will walk into Jersey to see a friendly face: Winger Ondrej Palat, who signed with the Devils two years ago.

Utah Hockey Club

GM Bill Armstrong told me that finding a player for "the poster on the outside of the arena" isn't necessarily a priority. Utah believes it has that kind of offensive player on the roster, be it Clayton Keller, Logan Cooley or Dylan Guenther. It's not like the team needs any help selling tickets ... but having Stamkos as the first face of the new franchise wouldn't hurt in further energizing the fan base, making a good offensive team even better and showing that the Smith Entertainment Group is ready to ante up to build a winner.

Besides, there would be a certain amount of irony in being reunited with defenseman Mikhail Sergachev, whom we all assumed the Lightning traded to Utah to open up cap space for Stamkos.

Wild-card tier

Buffalo Sabres

When Stamkos was flirting with free agency back in 2016, there was speculation that Buffalo had a geographic advantage over other suitors, given that Stamkos is an Ontario boy. But the courtship never got much further than Stamkos's agent bumping into owner Terry Pegula at the NHL draft.

Stamkos is the kind of veteran scorer this Sabres lineup could use, both in intangibles and offensive pop. He's essentially a turbo-charged version of what Jeff Skinner brought to Tage Thompson's top line -- and much less of a defensive liability. But Stamkos could also anchor a second scoring line for the Sabres, too, helping develop other young talent.

Buffalo has \$31.7 million in cap space after its buyout of Skinner but only 12 players under contract for next season. GM Kevyn Adams has talked about being active in free



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agency. Outside of Patrick Kane, who grew up a Sabres fan but has yet avoided a homecoming, no one on the market had the star power or veteran leadership that Stamkos could provide a roster that lacks both.

The Sabres haven't made the playoffs since 2011. That's probably not the greatest selling point for a guy coming from one of the most successful franchises of the past decade.

Chicago Blackhawks

Steven Stamkos' advice to Connor Bedard before the Chicago rookie's Calder Trophy-winning season: "Enjoy the moment. It goes by fast."

Boy, does it. One minute you're a franchise savior, the next you're a 34-year-old being given a low-ball contract offer.

Stamkos said the Blackhawks had "embraced the rebuild a little bit, and have some really good young pieces in play and obviously one of the best hockey markets in the world."

Does that mean Stamkos would join the Hawks as a linemate/mentor to Bedard? There are probably worse places to be than on the left side of a young center with an otherworldly shot. Chicago has ample cap space (over \$28 million) but note that GM Kyle Davidson has sought to temper expectations about making a splash this summer -- like when rumors that Chicago might pursue Guentzel as Bedard's linemate started popping up.

Montreal Canadiens

"He was my mentor, for sure. Everyone saw the chemistry we had on the ice, but not lot of people know, just because they don't get the behind-the-scenes look, of how much he meant to me, not only as a teammate but as a great friend."

That was Stamkos in 2017 on Marty St. Louis, his former Lightning teammate whose number was being retired in Tampa Bay. St. Louis has been the coach in Montreal for the past three seasons, overseeing a group that has gotten increasingly younger. While they're not playoff contenders, it's probably time for the Habs to emerge from the division basement. To that end, St. Louis could use a hand from an old friend.

Stamkos would be an offensive boost to the Habs, slotting in next to Alex Newhook and bolstering a power play that ranked 27th in the NHL last season (17.5%).

Again, not the ideal place if Stamkos is thinking "win now." But they have the cap space (\$10.2 million) and some potential (can't wait to see a full season of Lane Hutson) if he's patient.

Martin St. Louis and Steven Stamkos have a long history. Scott Audette/NHL/Getty Images

Toronto Maple Leafs

As BriseBois was announcing that he wasn't upping his offer to Stamkos, something started trending on social media in Canada: "He's 34."

Quite a change from when they were sneaking Stamkos jerseys in the Leafs locker room back in 2015.

It seemed like a collective preemptive strike from Leafs Nation as they see a roster that's already top heavy in allocated cap space for offense stars -- something Stamkos himself ridiculed -- and has glaring needs on defense and in goal.

Would it be a kick to see the Markham, Ontario, native work his offensive magic with the likes of Auston Matthews? Absolutely. Does it make sense from a financial or roster construction standpoint? Not really. But in the ongoing search for that secret ingredient that could snap a 56-year Stanley Cup drought, why not a motivated former champion/locally born savior?

The most hilarious tier

Florida Panther

His stuff is sorta there?

With Sam Reinhart reupping with the Panthers and a new contract for Carter Verhaeghe reportedly in the works, there may not be room for Stamkos on the Stanley Cup champions. But it would be the ultimate spite move for the Lightning captain to migrate down to south Florida and sign on with Tampa Bay's archrivals -- a divisional opponent, no less. They're not a bad hockey team, either.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Now this could just be one of those delicious moments of hockey symmetry: The Penguins trade away Sidney Crosby's winger Jake Guentzel at the deadline last season, citing a lack of appetite to extend him; Guentzel ends up with the Tampa Bay Lightning, ostensibly as Stamkos' replacement on the roster; and Stamkos signs for fewer dollars and fewer years to play on Sid's wing.

I mean, the Hockey Gods do have a wicked sense of humor sometimes.

This isn't a good financial fit, as the Penguins have around \$8 million in cap space and a defense to build out. But for a team that remains stubbornly "win now," what's one more star player in his mid-30s?



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Tampa Bay Lightning sign Jake Guentzel to 7-year, \$63M contract

By Greg Wyshynski

Winger Jake Guentzel has signed a seven-year contract with the Tampa Bay Lightning that carries an average annual value of \$9 million per season, the team announced Monday.

The Lightning acquired the rights to Guentzel from the Carolina Hurricanes earlier Sunday in exchange for a 2025 third-round draft pick. That gave Tampa Bay an exclusive negotiating window with Guentzel ahead of Monday's unrestricted free agent market opening.

Guentzel, 29, is a four-time 30-goal scorer, including 30 goals in 67 games between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Hurricanes last season. He won the Stanley Cup with the Penguins in 2017.

The Lightning opened up significant salary cap space on Saturday at the NHL draft, sending defenseman Mikhail Sergachev (\$8.5 million average annual value) to Utah and forward Tanner Jeannot (\$2.665 million AAV) to the Los Angeles Kings.

Many speculated those moves were made in order to re-sign captain Steven Stamkos, who becomes an unrestricted free agent on Monday. But GM Julien BriseBois told ESPN that he didn't increase his offer to Stamkos following those trades, and that both the player and the team expected he would test free agency.

"It's in the best interest of our organization to explore all options in the coming days, whether it be via trades or by getting into free agency," BriseBois said. "We have this cap space. We can allocate it in different ways by either getting volume or quality. I don't know yet how we're going to do that. I know the priority is going to be to address our forward group."

Guentzel is four years younger than Stamkos and could slide into his old spot on left wing with center Brayden Point and right wing Nikita Kucherov.

Guentzel was one of the most highly coveted forwards on the free agent market heading into the offseason. With his arrival in Tampa, that honor might now be bestowed on Stamkos.

2024 NHL draft grades: Which teams aced, whiffed their picks

By Rachel Doerrie

The 2024 NHL draft was a spectacle in every sense of the word. Count me among those who wouldn't mind seeing the event held at Sphere going forward. I understand wanting to spread league events around, but when you hit a grand slam like the NHL did here, don't mess with what works.

In terms of the selection process itself, some teams had fantastic drafts, extracting value with each selection, while other teams left value on the table with the talent available.

When considering a grade for each team, the totality of their work was considered: quality of players drafted, selection value and value derived from trades. Here's our grade for every front office, with insights on particular high-value picks and trades (as well as questionable ones).

Boston Bruins

Grade: C

When you have only four draft selections and three are in the 100s, it is difficult to come away with much.

Dean Letourneau was a quintessential Boston pick, even if it was a bit of a reach. The potential for Tage Thompson 2.0 has to be enticing for a franchise that needs help down the middle. He's going to take a few years, but there is a real chance Letourneau is a unicorn, and Boston took that swing.

Elliott Groenewold, Jonathan Morello and Loke Johansson don't have NHL projections, but you don't expect that from midround picks. It's a long shot for those three to make it, but they are fine bets.

Boston Bruins

Buffalo Sabres

Grade: B

The Sabres managed to have another quality forward fall into their laps. Buffalo likely should've traded the No. 14 pick for immediate help, but Konsta Helenius should play sooner than many people expect. The two-way driver will be a key piece of the Sabres' future.

Adam Kleber and Brodie Ziemer were good bets and should play NHL games in depth roles. Buffalo got good value with Ryerson Leenders in the seventh round; I expected him to be one of the first goaltenders off the board. It is fair to be disappointed in the Sabres for not acquiring immediate help, but Helenius is a player to be very excited about for the future.

Detroit Red Wings

Grade: B

The Red Wings need a high-end scorer, which many believed would be Jake Guentzel in free agency. It now seems like it may be Steven Stamkos.

In terms of picks, they left value on the board with Michael Brandsegg-Nygard, but got good value in the Ondrej Becher selection, and I liked the Max Plante selection. Brandsegg-Nygard should be a middle-six NHL player and an effective one at that. There's nothing to write home about, but nothing to be too disappointed in, either. A perfectly fine draft

Florida Panthers

Grade:

The Panthers had the best week in the NHL, as they won the Stanley Cup on Monday just four days before the draft. (And had quite a celebration on Sunday.)



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Linus Eriksson and Matvei Shuravlin are fun projects with NHL upside. Simon Zether has an intriguing package of skill and physicality combined with a two-way game. The path for each of these players is long, and none have confident NHL projections, but they are intriguing in their own rights. When you've won the Stanley Cup, you aren't expected to have the best draft, but Florida made some nice selections.

Montreal Canadiens

Grade:

The Canadiens were big winners on Friday night, getting both Ivan Demidov and Michael Hage. They are excellent value, and will be key pieces in the Canadiens' top six. Getting the second-best player in the draft at No. 5, and a top-15 player in the 20s is tidy business.

The sentimentality of the Aatos Koivu pick (he's Saku's son) plays well with the fans, and he has a real shot to be an NHLer. Other selections with value and NHL attributes include Logan Sawyer, Owen Protz and Tyler Thorpe. It wouldn't surprise me if this draft class yielded four regular NHLers, including two difference-makers. Demidov has a chance to be a superstar, and that alone should be very exciting to Habs fans.

Ottawa Senators

Grade: C

One thing was made perfectly clear this weekend: The current Senators regime has adopted the modus operandi of building a team that's hard to play against, compared to their predecessors. Unfortunately, that includes drafting players who fit that mold ahead of other highly skilled players.

Carter Yakemchuk over Zeev Buium, Zayne Parekh and Anton Silayev was head-scratching, but he should be a top-four defender in the NHL. They reached on other selections too, and there isn't a ton of upside through the rest of the class.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Grade: B-

Tampa Bay didn't have a selection until the fourth round, which means they started behind the eight ball. However, they could've drafted the likes of Luke Misa or Aron Kiviharju with their selections; both players went less than five picks later and were considered excellent value. Hagen Burrows and Jan Golicic have the best chance to be NHLers if their skating can develop to NHL level.

Though the Lightning draft picks left something to be desired, their trade execution was much better. The real story was the deck-clearing and subsequent acquisition of Jake Guentzel's negotiating rights. Adding Conor Geekie to the fold in the Mikhail Sergachev swap gives Tampa Bay a blue-chip prospect who will be ready sooner than anyone they would've drafted this weekend. J.J. Moser is a nice player who will fit in a fourth or fifth defenseman role at a team-friendly price.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Grade: C

The Leafs identified that a few of their first-round targets would be available in a trade-back scenario and were able to acquire a second-round pick by sliding back.

Had the Leafs nabbed EJ Emery, we're looking at a B-grade. They are banking on upside and that Ben Danford develops more offensive attributes to build on his excellent defensive game. Regardless, the Leafs needed a solid right-handed defender, and that's exactly what Danford is.

Trading for the rights to Chris Tanev solves the immediate issue and buys them time with Danford. There is little data on the rest of the class, but it is clear the MO was to get some big bodies into the pipeline, with six of eight selections coming in at 6-foot-2 or taller

Toronto Maple Leafs

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

Carolina Hurricanes

Grade: A-

Stop me if you've heard this before: The Carolina Hurricanes had a great draft.

Dominik Badkina, Nikita Artamonov and Justin Poirier were fantastic value selections. Using the 27th pick to acquire the selections to draft Badinka and Artamonov was A+ maneuvering. Artamonov was expected to be a late-first-round pick, and Badinka's stock was on the rise as well. Nabbing both along with Noel Fransen and Justin Poirier was quality work for new GM Eric Tulsy and his staff.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Grade: B

The Jackets couldn't pull off the Martin Necas trade at the draft, but Cayden Lindstrom is going to be a rock-solid second-line center for years to come. A one-two punch of Adam Fantilli-Cayden Lindstrom brings size, speed, physicality and skill.

Getting Charlie Elick in the second round was good value as well. The Blue Jackets had a solid prospect pool entering this weekend and added two pieces that will be quality NHLers.

Perhaps the Blue Jackets will use their plethora of prospects to acquire more immediate help. Luca Marrelli has a fair NHL projection as a bottom-pair defender, with the potential to be a solid transition player. The first two picks are the ones to be very excited about.

New Jersey Devils

Grade: B-

The Devils had a busy week, and had a fine draft, though they are likely disappointed that their 10th overall pick was unable to net them a player who could help them immediately.

Anton Silayev is fair value at No. 10 and fits the style that the Devils like on the back end. They want players who are difficult to play against to complement their skilled players, and Silayev is exactly that.

Herman Traff and Matyas Melovsky are good swings who provided value in the draft class. The trade for Paul Cotter that included Alexander Holtz was one they felt needed to be



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made, and the John Marino trade makes sense if they intend to sign Brett Pesce in free agency.

New York Islanders

Grade: A-

For what they had to work with, the Islanders had an excellent draft.

Cole Eiserman at No. 20 was the best value selection of the first round outside of Demidov. The Isles have needed scoring help for a while, and Eiserman is going to score goals in the NHL. After years without a first-round selection, Eiserman is someone Isles fans should be thrilled to have in the fold.

Jesse Pulkkinen and Kamil Bednarik are solid selections who drew positive reviews in the industry. Overall, a great weekend for the Isles.

New York Rangers

Grade: C

Walking away with EJ Emery must feel really good. Emery was a defenseman other teams were eyeing, hoping his lack of offensive production would see him slide to the mid-30s. Getting one of the best transition and shutdown defenders in the draft at No. 30 is great for New York.

Outside of that, it was largely disappointing for the Rangers, who left value on the board in favor of players lacking NHL projections. With four picks, three in the later rounds, you want to swing on skill; the Rangers did not.

Philadelphia Flyers

Grade: C

The Flyers left a lot of value on the table by passing on Buium and Helenius in favor of trading back and ultimately selecting Jett Luchanko. He's likely to be a middle-of-the-lineup player who plays in all situations. He's worth getting excited about because of the development progression in his draft year.

Jack Berglund and Spencer Gill are most likely to make the NHL out of the rest of the draft class, with both topping out as depth players. This was an opportunity for Philly to draft higher-ceiling players, and they opted for safety instead. It wasn't great, but not horrible.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Grade: B

Harrison Brunicke and Tanner Howe were solid value, and should be good middle-of-the-lineup players at their respective positions. Mac Swanson in the seventh was the most valuable selection outside of the first two rounds. He's small, but he's got a lot of markers that lead me to believe he can become an NHLer.

Lots of value extracted by the Pens in this year's draft. The acquisition of Kevin Hayes raised eyebrows, but they got a second-rounder for their trouble, and perhaps playing with two Hall of Famers can help produce offensive contributions from the big veteran. An interesting weekend, but the Penguins should be happy with their additions.

Washington Capitals

Grade: B+

Their draft picks get a C+, their trades get an A, for a combined grade of a B+.

Terik Parascak is an intriguing selection as a raw player, and if he continues his development curve, he'll be a solid contributor for Washington. Cole Hutson and Leon Muggli have NHL projections and Washington got decent value with both selections.

Acquiring Andrew Mangiapane for what amounted to Beck Malenstyn is tidy business. Solidifying the goaltending tandem by acquiring Logan Thompson completed a good week for the on-the-fly rebuild in the nation's capital.

CENTRAL DIVISION

Chicago Blackhawks

Grade: A-

The only reason this isn't an A+ is because Chicago left value on the board with all of their first-round selections. Getting either Ivan Demidov or Cole Eiserman (or both) would've boosted the haul.

Artyom Levshunov will undoubtedly be an impactful defenseman in the NHL, and fans should be excited about him. Sacha Boisvert and Marek Vanacker have fair chances to be middle-six contributors for Chicago, with Boisvert's ceiling being the highest. There was good value in the John Mustard, AJ Spellacy and Jack Pridham selections.

Chicago is clearly trying to build the fastest team in the NHL and will likely have at least three NHL players from this class, with an outside shot at five or six. Pretty tough not to be happy with that, even with the value left on the board.

Chicago Blackhawks

Colorado Avalanche

Grade: C

The Avalanche were on the prowl for goalies in this draft, and Ilya Nabokov was one of the best options available. Goalies are volatile and hard to project, so taking a few if you believe your pipeline lacks a solid goalie prospect isn't the worst idea.

Their positional selections, however, left value on the board. William Zellers has a long runway and a decent ceiling, but the lack of play at a top level is concerning. Nothing to write home about for the Avs, who will likely need to wait four or five years to find out whether one of their goalies pans out.

Dallas Stars

Grade: C+

In three years, when we're discussing Dallas hitting on players in the late first or middle rounds, Emil Hemming at No. 29 in 2024 is going to be a player we mention. The Stars continue to extract value out of their selections in that area.

Outside of that, the Stars had two picks in the late rounds that are unlikely to be NHL players. Trading the negotiating rights to Chris Tanev when it became clear he'd priced himself out of Dallas was shrewd, too. It wasn't a busy



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weekend for the Stars, but Hemming is a quality player for the pipeline.

Dallas Stars

Minnesota Wild

Grade: A

The Wild would be getting an A if they'd done nothing but draft Zeev Buium, Ryder Ritchie and Aron Kiviharju. The value extracted, particularly with Buium and Kiviharju, cannot be ignored. There is a real chance that Minnesota drafted two top-four defensemen and a flashy middle-six forward.

Getting Buium at No. 12 was a top-five steal in this draft, as there is a real chance he is Brock Faber's partner for the foreseeable future. Trading Vinni Lettieri for Jakub Lauko and a fourth-round pick swap helps the Wild get younger and swing on a player with a higher offensive ceiling. Overall, the Wild have to be happy with their trip to Las Vegas.

Nashville Predators

Grade: B

The Predators got good value with a few of their selections and took swings on players with higher ceilings.

Egor Surin was a bit of a reach for me, but he's likely to become an exciting NHL player, so it should be fine. Teddy Stiga and Miguel Marques were high-value picks, and both have serious NHL potential.

It is clear Nashville values skills and opts for high ceiling over safe players, contributing to their value selections. There's not as much confidence in the players they selected making the NHL, but they have the potential to be impact players if they hit their ceilings.

St. Louis Blues

Grade: B+

I really liked the Blues' draft. They needed defensemen and spent their first three picks on the position. Adam Jiricek has a chance to be a heist at No. 16 when the dust settles. There's a real path for him to become a steady top-four defender with top-pairing upside.

Lukas Fischer was fair value at No. 56 and could be a bottom-pairing defender with some development. The real value came with Adam Jecho and Tomas Mrsic, who should've been second-round selections. Both players have legitimate chances to be NHL players; the Blues may have quite a few players from this class in their lineup down the road.

Utah Hockey Club

Grade: A+

There is no other grade you can give Utah here. On the totality of their work, it was a brilliant weekend for the NHL's newest club.

Using their plethora of picks over the next few years to trade up and acquire a second first-rounder was good business. Both Tij Iginla and Cole Beaudoin were good selections that will be key pieces of Utah's forward core.

Losing Conor Geekie hurts but was palatable given the prospect pool depth. Acquiring Mikhail Sergachev and John Marino is tidy business, as both will be key players on Utah's blue line. They're going to surprise opponents next season.

Winnipeg Jets

Grade: C

Without a first-round pick, and with 2022 first-rounder Rutger McGroarty potentially on the way out via trade, it wasn't a great weekend for the Jets. They were unable to trade McGroarty at the draft, which is something they wanted to accomplish.

Alfons Freij is a solid selection at No. 37 and should be a good middle-pairing defender in the NHL. Kevin He is intriguing and could develop into a depth player. Otherwise, nothing to write home about for Winnipeg.

Winnipeg Jets

PACIFIC DIVISION

Anaheim Ducks

Grade: B+

The Ducks had two first-rounders and shocked the hockey world (and the player) when they selected Beckett Sennecke with the third overall pick. Sennecke will be a solid NHL player, but that was a bit of a reach.

Stian Solberg will be a solid NHL defender and was a big riser in the draft. Someone was going to take him ahead of defenders with better projections, but if anyone should be trusted to develop a defender to his full potential, it is the Ducks.

The Maxim Masse and Tarin Smith selections provided solid value, and both have decent NHL projections.

Calgary Flames

Grade: A

In terms of value and quality of players selected, Calgary may have had the best draft. Zayne Parekh, Matvei Gridin, Andrew Basha, Henry Mews, Luke Misa and Jacob Battaglia were fantastic selections and have legitimate shots to be NHL players in varying roles.

Parekh is their future power-play quarterback who is better defensively than many credit him. Basha, Mews and Misa were high-value selections who all have NHL projections with varying confidence. Flames fans should be very happy with how their team did in Vegas.

Edmonton Oilers

Grade: B-

The Oilers had a mixed-bag draft. Taking a swing on Sam O'Reilly with the last pick of the first round may prove to be a good one given his performance in the playoffs for the London Knights. His development has been fun to watch, and London is a good spot for him to develop into a player who will be a middle-six contributor in the NHL.

Eemil Vinni was a solid value pick and one of the best goaltenders in the draft class. Dalyn Wakely had an excellent season as an overage player and is worth the late-round



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shot. He's physical, wins puck battles and saw his production more than double season over season. If he's a victim of COVID development delay, the Oilers may have gotten a sneaky steal here.

Los Angeles Kings

Grade: B

After trading Pierre-Luc Dubois to Washington, the Kings were able to extract decent value for their selections. Liam Greentree, Carter George and Jared Woolley are all intriguing prospects who provided value.

Greentree brings a lot to the table as a modern power forward who should fit well with L.A.'s roster going forward. George is someone the industry was high on, with many pointing out that he has the tools to be a solid NHL goalie. Woolley is another player who flew under the radar because he played Junior B until midway through the season. He's expected to play a much bigger role for the London Knights next season. The Kings should feel pretty good with their selections.

San Jose Sharks

Grade: A+

Anytime you're adding two cornerstones to your lineup, you've had a great weekend. Add in the value of Igor Chernyshov and Leo Sahlin Wallenius -- who should be good middle-of-the-lineup players -- and the Sharks added quality pieces to their organization.

The Sharks' pipeline needed defense, and they were able to grab at least two players that should be reliable NHLers; in Sam Dickinson's case, they added a potential difference-maker. When you're coming home with a future top-line center and top-four defenseman, you've had a great weekend.

Seattle Kraken

Grade: B+

Seattle would've been better served taking one of the quality defensemen available to them at No. 8, but Berkly Catton's offensive tools and ceiling were too tantalizing. He's going to

create and score in a top-six role at the NHL level; the Kraken should be confident in that. They have a lot of young, two-way players, and Catton brings dynamic offensive skill.

Julius Miettinen is a good selection with third-line potential. Jakub Fibigr should've been long gone by the time the Kraken selected him at No. 202, and while he doesn't have a strong NHL chance, he has a better chance than a lot of players who went before him. A good weekend for the Kraken.

Vancouver Canucks

Grade: B-

The Canucks got good value considering they didn't have a selection to make until the third round.

They strayed from their typical MO of functional toughness in favor of soft skill. Melvin Fernstrom's production in Sweden this season indicates he's got a fair shot to play in the NHL if his skating improves. Riley Patterson was a good bet in the fourth round, with good speed and flashes of offensive upside. Anthony Romani was great value in the sixth, even as an overage player. The offensive tools are there, and the underlying numbers suggest potential to become a late-round steal.

Vegas Golden Knights

Grade: B

The hosts certainly got down to business at the draft.

Trevor Connelly is one of the best prospects in the draft on skill, but that's just half the story. This pick will be closely monitored and scrutinized given accusations that Connelly made racist comments on and off the ice

Their trades netted them swapping out Logan Thompson for Akira Schmid as well as Alexander Holtz for Paul Cotter, while netting an extra third-round pick. That's good asset management. Vegas gets younger in both positions and hopes that Bruce Cassidy can unlock the potential of 2020 No. 7 pick Holtz.

Combine the draft and the trades together, and it's a net positive weekend for the Golden Knights.



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Hurricanes agree to eight-year contract extension with Jaccob Slavin

By Sportsnet Staff

The Carolina Hurricanes are getting some important business done once free agency opens with defenceman Jaccob Slavin agreeing to an eight-year contract extension, Sportsnet can confirm.

Slavin has spent his entire career with the Hurricanes since being drafted in the fourth round of the 2012 NHL Draft.

This keeps one potential top defenceman from reaching free agency status in 2025 and prevents the Hurricanes from losing any other defencemen, with Brett Pesce and Brady Skjei expected to hit the open market.

32 Thoughts: Post-draft buzz with free agency up next

By Elliott Friedman

Tampa Bay GM Julien BriseBois electrified the draft Saturday morning by trading Mikhail Sergachev to Utah and Tanner Jeannot to Los Angeles — with the Lightning poised to do big business as free-agency approaches.

BriseBois indicated Friday that franchise cornerstones Steven Stamkos and Victor Hedman were trending in different directions — Stamkos to free agency and Hedman to a contract extension on the first day he is eligible, July 1.

Tampa's believed priority target is Jake Guentzel, coming off a 30-goal season in Pittsburgh and Carolina. And they acquired the player Sunday, giving them exclusive negotiating rights for the final day before the market opens.

What happened between the Hurricanes and Guentzel is still being determined. According to multiple sources, Guentzel's ask was eight years with an \$8M AAV. It was made some time ago, with the two sides grinding away in negotiations since that time — perfectly normal.

On Thursday, the Hurricanes agreed to meet those terms and were prepared to discuss structure. Several teams said they heard the winger was staying in Carolina. But, with July 1 approaching, those same sources indicated Guentzel decided that, the longer it took, the more he thought about testing free-agency, as is his right.

"It looks like the market changed from when they started negotiating and now," another GM said. 1. As the Stamkos news spread over the past few days, several salivated at the thought of talking to him. We'll see how he handles this. Stamkos did not enjoy the 2016 dog-and-pony show, ending it prematurely. It's absolutely weird to process him anywhere but Tampa. Never thought I'd see the day. My money's on Nashville (no wagering on anything I say, please), but a lot of suitors are putting on their cufflinks in this dating game.

2. It's believed the Lightning proposed a couple of different concepts: the long-term low-AAV idea and a shorter structure that would eventually lead to bonus-laden one-year contracts. Stamkos would be eligible for such as soon as next summer, after he turns 35. Those would be more advantageous to Tampa for salary-cap reasons. The fact he had to wait so close to free-agency twice while so many teammates were taken care of in advance ultimately ruptured the relationship. BriseBois made it very clear during his post-

draft availability that he sees things as "always about trying to build the strongest group possible."

3. Matt Duchene is staying in Dallas, barring a major collapse in negotiations.

4. My guess on Chris Tanev and Toronto is six years at around \$4M per season.

5. As a public service, I am providing my official Mitch Marner position (clip-and-save). Thesis: in about a decade, he should retire as the greatest Toronto-born Maple Leaf ever. He's that good. If it doesn't happen, everyone involved is going to regret it.

6. Columbus offered Martin Necas an extension in a potential trade for the fourth overall pick, but things didn't work out. I'm wondering if there's any chance Guentzel's impending departure changes the Hurricanes' mind on moving Necas. Maybe they go to arbitration and live with the number or negotiate a one-year deal.

7. Things I did not leave Vegas with a great read on: Where things stand with Jonathan Marchessault and Vegas or Jacob Trouba and the Rangers. The Marchessault negotiation's been a real grind. Trouba/Rangers could be a battle as he switches from a no-move to a partial no-trade. We saw what happened with Barclay Goodrow, and Trouba's agent, Kurt Overhardt, is no shrinking violet. One of the challenges is that Trouba was shocked by the possibility he could be traded, and is still coming to grips with it.

8. Golden Knights GM Kelly McCrimmon said post-draft that Logan Thompson asked for a trade (more opportunity) and Akira Schmid will start as their No. 3 goalie, getting time at AHL Henderson. So they are looking for an NHL backup to Adin Hill.

9. A few teams say St. Louis is sending signals they are going to try some free-agent swings

10. Edmonton temporary GM Jeff Jackson said Friday they are trying to sign all of their unrestricted free agents.

11. On Leon Draisaitl: the thing to recognize here is that this is not just a Draisaitl negotiation. This is also a Connor McDavid conversation. They are very, very close but this is going to be a deep dive into what both are thinking in the short and long-term. These are not discussions to have in the immediate aftermath of an emotional defeat. Jackson



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seems prepared to slow-play this, waiting until after a new GM is hired, letting everyone breathe. The Oilers won't be concerned if no concrete answers exist for a few weeks. They didn't have to know by the draft or July 1. We'll see.

12. Sam Gagner wants to keep playing. Most importantly, wife Rachel gave him the okay.

13. Nashville's told teams — and there are a lot of interested parties — that the price for Yaroslav Askarov is either a current NHLer or a similarly highly-rated prospect who is not a goalie.

14. Philadelphia is quite good at dealing with the ups-and-downs of getting players from the KHL to North America, but there is now some uncertainty around talented young goalie Alexei Kolosov. They are hopeful things will work out.

15. To tighten the draft, the NHL leans on teams to cut down the pre-selection welcomes — shouting out the hometown party, congratulating the Stanley Cup champ, etc. In the first round, no one mentioned Florida. I've never seen that before. And one Panther reached out to say he thought it was an absolute joke.

16. Steven Lorentz was Sergei Bobrovsky's "designated shooter" in practice this season, going out early to help the goaltender work through drills. Watching some video we showed in the final, the great Zac Dalpe reached out to say that he will always be grateful to Bobrovsky. The reason? Because then-Columbus coach John Tortorella abhors morning skates, Dalpe was one of the only available players to shoot with Bobrovsky on game-days. So, he fought for the forward to stay on the NHL roster for this purpose. Dalpe said it was worth a lot of salary to him. Markus Hannikainen similarly benefitted.

17. There was a lot of debate about Connor McDavid not coming on-ice for the Conn Smythe Trophy presentation. Apparently, he did agree to do it, but before it was presented, he went into the Oilers room to address his teammates. That was so emotional he either didn't want to leave or was in no headspace to leave.

18. One coach to watch for potential AHL openings is Ottawa's Brad Ralph, who has won three straight ECHL championships with the Florida Everblades.



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Hurricanes Trade Jake Guentzel to Tampa Bay

By Bob Wage

The Carolina Hurricanes just released a press release announcing the trade of Jake Guentzel to Tampa Bay for a third round draft pick.

A couple of days ago, there was a rumor from NHL "insiders" that the two sides were all but signed, but Tampa threw a wrench in the works and apparently upped the ante.

The good news is that the organization still has Ty Smith.

What's next for Carolina?

Carolina's Draft Results and Reviews

By Bob Wage

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA - JUNE 29: Timur Kol poses for a portrait after being drafted by the Carolina Hurricanes with the 168th overall pick in the 2024 Upper Deck NHL Draft at Sphere on June 29, 2024 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Photo by Candice Ward/Getty Images

The Carolina Hurricanes traded down a couple of times and made another trade to add a pick for next year. In all, they made 10 selections, six of them Russian.

First, we will look at the picks and then see what the experts have to say.

The Canes traded their first round pick, 27th overall, for two picks in the second round. That led to a boring Friday night but the team seemed to make the most of their picks on Saturday.

Pick 34 - Dominik Badinka

This defenseman is projected as a possible second pairing guy. At 6'3 he has good size and he is currently playing in the Swedish Hockey League.

Pick 50 - Nikita Artamonov

Artamonov is a forward currently playing in the KHL at his young age. At 5'11 he's not the biggest guy but projects as a possible bottom six forward.

Pick 69 - Noel Fransen

Fransen is an offensive minded blueliner who had 44 points in 46 games playing in a Swedish junior league last season. He is projected to play in the SHL next year.

Pick 124 - Alexander Siryatsky

The Russian is another defenseman who played in a junior Russian league last year.

Pick 133 - Oskar Vuollet

Vuollet is a Swedish forward who had 61 points in 44 games in a Swedish J20 league last year.

Pick 156 - Justin Poirier

This winger is listed at 5'7 or 5'8 but he scored 51 goals last year in the "Q", the first 17 year-old to do so since Sidney Crosby. He added another 18 goals in 17 playoff games. He does not shy away from physicality.

Pick 168 - Timur Kol

Kol is a big (6'4) Russian defenseman who is only 17.

Pick 184 - Roman Shokhrin

Shokhrin is another big Russian defenseman (6'5) who likes to knock people down.

Pick 188 - Fyodor Avromov

This Russian winger has a nice shot and can be physical.

Pick 220 - Aundrey Krutov

Another Russian winger. He had 50 points in 41 games in Russian juniors last year.

The Hurricanes ended up drafting six Russians, three of them defensemen and three forwards. They selected three players from the Swedish Leagues, and one from the QMJHL.

In all they drafted five defensemen and five forwards.

Of course the pundits loved the picks made by the Carolina front office, as they have in the past.

Scott Wheeler put them in the "Overtime Winner" category.

Steven Ellis gave them an "A" at number seven overall.

Flo hockey gave them a B plus and mentioned that they said that the Canes picked up some role players.



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The Hockey News

Hurricanes Extend Qualifying Offers to Four RFAs

By Ryan Henkel

The Canes qualified half of their RFAs.

The Carolina Hurricanes announced Sunday that they have extended qualifying offers to multiple RFAs: Seth Jarvis, Martin Necas, Jack Drury and Dylan Coghlan.

June 30 was the deadline to extend qualifying offers and while a player doesn't have to accept the QO, the extension allows Carolina to retain RFA rights.

Any player who does not receive a QO becomes a UFA.

That means that Max Comtois, Griffin Mendel, Blake Murray and Tuukka Tiekola are now UFAs and free to sign anywhere else.

Jake Guentzel Traded to Tampa Bay

By Ryan Henkel

The 29-year-old winger spent two months with the Canes.

Well, it seems that the good vibes are no more.

The Carolina Hurricanes announced today that they have traded forward Jake Guentzel to the Tampa Bay Lightning for a third round pick in 2025.

After Guentzel was acquired by Carolina at last season's trade deadline, he seemed to be the perfect complement on the Canes' top line and produced at a crazy clip.

He had immediate chemistry with Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis and played perfectly within Rod Brind'Amour's system.

As an upcoming UFA, both sides seemed confident that a deal would get done and for a while things seemed to be progressing well.

But it was reported last night that Guentzel and the Canes were not going to be able to come together.

The sniper originally asked for an eight year, \$64 million deal and while Carolina was hesitant to match at first, they eventually agreed, just way too late however.

By the point the Hurricanes agreed, Guentzel had seemingly already made up his mind to move on.

Tampa Bay was a team that cleared a ton of cap space during the draft trading both defenseman Mikhail Sergachev as well as forward Tanner Jeannot.

So with tons of cap space it seems they are poised to offer Guentzel a much bigger deal, one where no state income tax can take any of it.

It was good while it lasted, but now Carolina will have to pivot in a major way to figure out how to replace Guentzel in the lineup.

All in all, it seems like a big misplay by the Canes front office.

Multiple Hurricanes Expected to Hit Free Agent Market

By Ryan Henkel

The Canes will be losing quite a few of players once July 1 hits.

The Carolina Hurricanes are facing a major roster facelift this offseason with quite a few players on expiring deals.

Multiple of the Hurricanes' core pieces won't be back this season and with free agency a day away, that reality is coming fast.

Jake Guentzel

When the Canes acquired Jake Guentzel at last season's trade deadline, they showed the aggressiveness needed to win the Cup.

Guentzel was a perfect fit on Carolina's top line and played exactly the way the Canes like to play.

Everything seemed primed to extend him and run it back.

However, what seemed like the perfect fit has seemingly crumbled away after the Hurricanes played hardball for too long as now it seems that Guentzel will be going to free agency.

Teuvo Teravainen

The 29-year-old Finnish winger has been one of the league's best middle-six forwards for years providing solid scoring, as well as strong defensive play at both 5v5 and on the penalty kill.

He's got some of the best vision in the league and he's able to fit almost anywhere in a lineup.



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However, it seems that he and Carolina will be splitting up after eight years together.

Brett Pesce

Pesce is one of the more underrated players in the league, being a tremendous entry denier as well as elite at defending close to the net.

The 29-year-old righthanded blueliner has been a big part of Carolina's identity for his entire career, but now it seems likely that he'll be moving on come July 1.

Multiple sources have linked the Tarrytown native to the New Jersey Devils.

Brady Skjei

Skjei is a high-end, two-way defenseman who really blossomed into a top player with Carolina over the last few years.

The 30-year-old, lefthanded blueliner has been one of the top scoring defenseman in the league over the last three seasons and he's shown an ability to run a power play this year as well.

The only reason he wouldn't be coming back is because he's played so well that someone is going to be offering him quite a lot of money.

The Nashville Predators have been rumored to be big on Skjei.

Jordan Martinook

Things have been virtually radio silent when it comes to Martinook.

I haven't heard much either way on him, but he's the type of player a rebuilding team would pay significant money for.

The 31-year-old winger is a vocal, veteran leader who plays hard and has consistently produced even if many want to point out how he misses on more than a few chances too.

Perhaps the Canes just know they have to figure out some of their more major deals first, but one day out from free agency with no new information doesn't always bode well.

Stefan Noesen

Another player I haven't heard anything on, Noesen has been perhaps one of the best players in the league in terms of value.

The 31-year-old forward earned league minimum for two years but has been a tremendous piece on the fourth line with an insane scoring rate compared to the minutes he gets

Noesen has performed so well that I don't know if Carolina will want to give him that raise which I believe a few teams will be willing to do.



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Carolina Hurricanes' 2024 NHL Entry Draft Recap - The Hockey Writers Hurricanes Prospects Latest News, Analysis & More

By Zach Martin

The 2024 NHL Entry Draft has come and gone. Over the two-day event from June 28-29 at The Sphere in Las Vegas, 225 players from around the world heard their names get called on the NHL's biggest stage. They know where their rights will be held over the next few seasons, and the teams who drafted them are stockpiling the prospect cupboards, hoping some, if not all, of their selections are home runs. The Carolina Hurricanes had 10 picks over the event, all on Day 2 after trading their 27th overall pick to the Chicago Blackhawks on Friday night (June 28). General Manager Eric Tulsy and his staff kept themselves busy by trading back a few times during the draft to collect picks throughout the day.

When it was all said and done, they managed to draft six Russians, two Swedish, one Czech, and one Canadian player as Rounds 2-7 went on during the Saturday of the draft. Grading players the day they get drafted is tough, and it generally takes four to six years to figure out how they pan out. Despite the draft grades on each team and their prospects, this will mainly just recap who the Hurricanes selected throughout the draft. Without further ado, who are calling themselves Carolina Hurricanes prospects after the 2024 NHL Draft?

Fresh Faces in Raleighwood

Round 2, 34th Overall – Dominik Badinka, RHD, Malmö (Sweden)

After trading the 27th overall pick the night before to the Blackhawks, the Hurricanes selected right defenseman Dominik Badinka of the Malmö Redhawks of the Swedish Hockey League (SHL). The Chomutov, Czechia native tallied one goal and four points in 33 SHL games with Malmö during the 2023-24 season. Badinka was one of three defensemen aged 19 or younger to earn a point in the SHL last season. He represented Czechia internationally and posted two assists in five games at the 2022 Hlinka Gretzky Cup. The 18-year-old puck-moving defenseman was ranked 14th among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

When asked about Badinka, Assistant General Manager Darren Yorke stated, "He's 18 years old and playing in a hard league. He has the ability to play fast and to really end plays off the rush. I think that's something that when you look at the way the game is played and how we want to play, you've got to be able to play fast and play defensively. His length and his mobility that he's able to play with against men, and the way he shuts it down is impressive. His puck-moving game, his transition, and his ability to play in the defensive zone and quickly get the puck up is something he excels at doing. I'm really excited to get that type of player."

Badinka plans on playing for Malmö in the SHL during the 2024-25 season.

Round 2, 50th Overall – Nikita Artamonov, LW, Nizhny Novgorod (KHL)

The other pick that the Hurricanes acquired for the 27th overall pick was the 50th pick from the Blackhawks. Ultimately, they selected left-winger Nikita Artamonov of Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod of the KHL. The native of Nizhnekamsk, Russia, finished the 2023-24 season at Torpedo with seven goals and 23 points in 54 games. He was projected for the first round but fell to the 50th overall pick, where the Hurricanes were more than happy to snap him up. When he debuted with Torpedo in 2022-23, he had 0.42 points per game, which tied for the sixth-highest scoring rate in KHL history before turning 19. Artamonov was ranked 19th among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Yorke stated when talking about Artamonov, "He's playing in a very good league, and it's very challenging to produce the way he did. You have this incredibly energy-driven player who can play a bunch of different styles. He can play a bunch of different styles. He can get in on the forecheck; he can go and make plays. Look at how we play and how aggressive we play, that's a style that fits incredibly well. Then you add his skill level on top of it, and it was great for us that we were able to pick up a talented player who also likes to play hard and fast."

Nikita Artamonov, SKA Hockey Club (Photo by Maksim Konstantinov/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)

He expects to play with Torpedo in the KHL for the 2024-25 season.

Round 3, 69th Overall – Noel Fransen, LHD, Farjestad Jr. (Sweden Jr.)

Initially, Carolina had the 60th overall pick but traded it to the Columbus Blue Jackets for the 69th and 133rd overall picks. When they got to the 69th overall pick, they selected defenseman Noel Fransen of Farjestad BK J20 of the J20 Swedish League. The Karlstad, Sweden native tallied 20 goals and 44 points in 45 games for Farjestad's junior team during the 2023-24 season. He finished the season ranked first in goals and points and fifth in assists among all defensemen in the junior league. The puck-moving defenseman has a scoring touch that the Hurricanes would love to see grow over time. Fransen even played four games for the SHL side and scored a goal in his SHL debut against MoDo on Dec. 19. He was ranked 48th overall among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Yorke said about Fransen, "Noel's a player who maybe doesn't get the recognition that he deserved because he didn't make some of the international teams. He's an incredibly offensively gifted player. He's able to do almost whatever he wanted when he was playing in the Swedish junior league, whether it's skate around guys, skate through guys, skate underneath them with the skill, or even score



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from the blue line. At the same point, he's still able to defend. He's a really highly offensive player, but that's not to take away from some of the defensive style of his game."

He is expected to rejoin with Farjestad for the 2024-25 season.

Round 4, 124th Overall – Alexander Siryatsky, LHD, Magnitogorsk Jr. (Russia Jr.)

The first pick in the draft that the Hurricanes initially owned and didn't trade away was the 142nd overall selection in Round 4. They selected defenseman Alexander Siryatsky of Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk in the MHL. He went on to tally five goals and 19 points in 36 games in the top Russian junior league. The Omsk, Russia native will definitely need to bulk up over the next few seasons, being under 160 pounds for a defenseman. The 17-year-old takes pride in his hockey IQ and is looking to become a full-time KHL player in the fall. He was ranked 66th among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Yorke stated on Siryatsky, "The development that he had over the last 12 months is incredible. He came on playing in the MHL and then going on and playing through all the Russian leagues; he started to add more offensive elements to his game. He's a guy who on the offensive zone blue line, he is able to create space, whether it's with his mobility or with his hands. It's not something you always see from younger defensemen who have to play against men. The higher-end offensive thinking that he's shown has been great."

He is expected to play with Stalnye Lisy Magnitogorsk for the 2024-25 season.

Round 5, 133rd Overall – Oskar Vuollet, LW, Skelleftea Jr. (Sweden Jr.)

The second of two picks that the Hurricanes got in the trade for the 60th overall pick from the Blue Jackets came at the 133rd overall pick in round five. They selected left-winger Oskar Vuollet of Skelleftea AIK J20 of the J20 Swedish League. The Skelleftea, Sweden native, was voted the Best Forward in Sweden's top junior league last season. He tallied 29 goals and 61 points in 41 games. Furthermore, he finished second in goals and tied fifth in points among all league skaters in the 2023-24 season. Vuollet even played 15 games for the main Skelleftea team in the SHL despite finishing with zero points. However, it was enough to impress the Hurricanes scouts and front office. Vuollet was ranked 90th among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

When talking about the impressive Vuollet, Yorke stated, "Maybe a little underappreciated for what he's accomplished. For two years in a row, all he's done is produce at the junior level. Then he gets called up for 15 games toward the end of the year and plays the exact same way against men. He's an incredibly smart player. He's been able to play fast offensively, whether it's been skating with the puck, 1-on-1 skills, moving the puck, being able to move with the puck, playing a give-and-go game. Put him on the power play and he can run your half-wall and still be a dual threat. He's a really high-end offensive player who was able to do what he did at the junior level and show it against men, even if he didn't have the same production."

He is expected to play with either Skelleftea J20 or the main Skelleftea AIK team for the 2024-25 season.

Round 5, 156th Overall – Justin Poirier, RW, Baie-Comeau (QMJHL)

The lone Canadian selected in the Hurricanes' draft was right-winger Justin Poirier of Baie-Comeau Drakkar in the QMJHL. The 17-year-old Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec native, had himself a 2023-24 season. Poirier tallied 51 goals and 82 points in 68 regular-season games, adding 18 goals and 27 points in 17 postseason games. He is one of the most prolific scorers that Carolina drafted. The season saw him reach some benchmarks as he became the first 17-year-old to reach the 50-goal mark in the QMJHL since Sidney Crosby. Plus, he became the first QMJHL skater in 10 years to lead the league in goals during the regular season and playoffs. Poirier is considered someone with a hard shot who can snipe the puck at will on the net. He was ranked 82nd among North American Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Justin Poirier Baie-Comeau Drakkar

Justin Poirier, Baie-Comeau Drakkar (Photo Credit: Kassandra Blais Photographie)

Yorke stated while talking about Poirier, "Goal-scorer. There are very few people who have scored as many goals as he had over the last two years in the CHL during their draft years. He was probably a little undervalued, unfortunately, because he's not very tall, but all he does is score. It really doesn't matter the games that he's playing against bigger players, didn't matter. He just scores. It's an incredible shot. He's able to find open space, and he does not need much room. If you want to watch some of the goals he scored, he's able to sneak some of these shots in right underneath the bar. He's somehow able to find the top corner of the net. He's a high-end goal-scorer."

As of right now, it is not certain what Poirier's next season will bring, whether he will return to the QMJHL, or what the Hurricanes will want him to do for the 2024-25 season.

Round 6, 168th Overall – Timur Kol, LHD, Omsk Jr. (Russia Jr.)

The Hurricanes went back to selecting Russian defensemen as they selected Timur Kol with the 168th overall pick. Kol was mainly with Omskie Krylia of the VHL for the 2023-24 season. The Moscow, Russia native tallied five goals and eight points in 23 games, along with two goals and eight points in 14 MHL games with Omskie Yastreby. Kol was ranked 36th among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Yorke said about Kol, "He's great defensively, similar to how we were describing Badinka. You have to be able to play fast and defend fast, and being able to do that is what he's done this season. It's pretty special."

He is expected to play with SKA-1946 St. Petersburg of the MHL for the 2024-25 season.

Round 6, 184th Overall – Roman Shokhrin, LHD, Loko-76 Yaroslavl (Russia Jr.)

Carolina kept on the Russian train in the sixth round with another defenseman from the MHL, Roman Shokhrin. The Nizhny Novgorod, Russia native, tallied two goals and 14 points in 36 MHL games with Loko-76 Yaroslavl during the



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2023-24 season. He was ranked 39th overall among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Yorke stated about Shokhrin, "He's an incredibly gifted skater. He's got great mobility. Even though they have to play on the bigger ice he's showed his ability to defend versus the rush. He's probably got a bit more offensive game to him [than Timur Kol]. We want him to use those edges and be able to open up space. His ability to create has been pretty good."

He is expected to rejoin Loko-76 Yaroslavl for the 2024-25 season in the MHL.

Round 6, 188th Overall – Fyodor Avramov, LW, Stupino Jr. (Russia Jr.)

On their third of four straight Russian-drafted players, the Hurricanes selected left-winger Fyodor Avramov of Kapitan Stupino. The St. Petersburg, Russia native tallied 23 goals and 44 points in 49 MHL games during the 2023-24 season. Avramov led his team in goals, assists, and points for the season. At one point in the season, he went on a 14-game point streak from Dec. 10 to Jan. 27. Avramov is a big and physical 20-goal scorer with a lot of raw offensive potential early on in his career and ranked 53rd among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

Yorke stated about Avramov, "He can shoot. He has a massive shot that he's able to get off and to beat goalies from distance. Then you put him in one-on-one space; he has those skills to make guys miss. His size is really valuable. We hope to develop the rest of his game, but from an offensive standpoint, his game is pretty high-end."

He is expected to rejoin Kapitan Stupino for the 2024-25 season in the MHL.

Round 7, 220th Overall – Andrey Krutov, LW, Nizhny Novgorod Jr. (Russia Jr.)

The final pick of the 2024 NHL Entry Draft for the Hurricanes was their fourth-straight Russian, left-winger Andrey Krutov

of Chaika Nizhny Novgorod in the MHL. The Togliatti, Russia, native tallied 21 goals and 50 points in 41 games. Krutov led the team in points while ranking second in both goals and assists for the 2023-24 season. After a stellar regular season, he added seven goals and 10 points in 14 playoff games. He is seen as a creative spark up front with the ability to have good playmaking and vision to go along with his creativity. Krutov was ranked 97th among International Skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

On their last draft pick in Krutov, Yorke stated, "A really high-quality offensive thinker. It's hard to say whether he's a better shooter or a playmaker, but he's able to see everything and make guys around him better. He's got to get a little quicker, but the value of how he sees the ice and the ability he has to make others around him better is probably his best asset."

He is expected to rejoin Chaika Nizhny Novgorod for the 2024-25 season in the MHL.

Final Thoughts

The Hurricanes had a busy 2024 NHL Draft as they traded picks with the Blackhawks and the Blue Jackets to acquire more draft picks over the two days. They had an even split of five forwards and five defensemen over the 10 picks on Day 2 of the draft. Carolina selected six Russians, two Swedes, one Czech, and one Canadian, all with different skill sets, and the team hopes to grow over the next few seasons. It'll be interesting to keep an eye on the development of these players as the years go by.

Now, all eyes turn to the free agency period and re-sign phase, which begins on Monday, July 1. Teams have one day to travel back to their respective cities and get a breather before the next big event starts on the NHL schedule. Do not expect it to slow down over the next couple of weeks, so make sure to strap in as the wild ride continues for the NHL offseason that isn't a week past Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Final.



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NHL Rumors: Jake Guentzel, Lightning Agree to New Contract After Hurricanes Trade

By Julia Stumbaugh

NEW YORK, NY - MAY 07: Carolina Hurricanes Center Jake Guentzel (59) in action during the first overtime in Game 2 of the National Hockey League Stanley Cup Playoffs Eastern Conference Second Round game between the Carolina Hurricanes and the New York Rangers on May 7, 2024 at Madison Square Garden in New York, NY. (Photo by Joshua Sarner/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images)

Jake Guentzel and the Tampa Bay Lightning agreed to a new contract on Sunday, according to Frank Seravalli of Daily Faceoff.

The terms of the deal were not initially known.

The reported contract agreement comes on the same day the Lightning acquired Guentzel's rights from the Carolina Hurricanes for a 2025 third-round pick.

As a result, Guentzel's brief tenure with the Hurricanes ended with the team's second-round elimination by the New York Rangers.

The move marks Guentzel's third team in two seasons. He joined the Hurricanes for their playoff run following his trade from the Pittsburgh Penguins in March.

The Lightning will hope Guentzel is able to adjust to his new team as well as he did to the Hurricanes following the midseason trade.

Despite suffering a brutal rib injury that left him sidelined for three weeks prior to the trade deadline, Guentzel was an instant difference-maker in Carolina. The winger recorded two goals and six assists through his first five games with the Canes.

He went on to finish the regular season with eight goals and 17 assists in 17 games, then added four goals and five assists in 11 playoff contests.

There's plenty of reason to believe Guentzel will continue his consistent production during his age-30 season.

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Despite missing 20 games and adjusting to a midseason trade, he finished his eighth NHL season with his fourth straight 30-goal, 70-point campaign.

Guentzel's offense may not have been enough push the Hurricanes past the New York Rangers in the second round of the 2024 playoffs, but it was enough to prove to the Lightning that he could succeed as a top-line winger even away from Sidney Crosby.

After skating on Crosby's wing for seven and a half seasons, Guentzel quickly found chemistry with Sebastian Aho on Carolina's top line.

The veteran winger will be expected to get similar first-line minutes in 2024-25 as a potential linemate for Brayden Point.

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SportScan

Articles from outlets covering the Hurricanes' upcoming opponents and league-wide news

1316898 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes trade rights to forward Jake Guentzel to Tampa Bay Lightning

BY CHIP ALEXANDER UPDATED JUNE 30, 2024 9:28 PM

The Carolina Hurricanes made the biggest splash in the NHL before the league's trade deadline last season by trading for forward Jake Guentzel.

But the Hurricanes will not be keeping Guentzel.

The team announced Sunday that Guentzel, a pending unrestricted free agent, had been traded to the Tampa Bay Lightning for a third-round pick in the 2025 NHL draft.

The Canes and Guentzel were believed to have been working on an eight-year contract that will pay him an average of \$8 million or more a season. Unable to get a deal completed, the Canes made the trade with the Lightning, who opened up more than \$11 million of cap space Saturday by trading defenseman Mikhail Sergachev and forward Tanner Jeannot.

Canes general manager Eric Tulsky had said the team would do all it could to keep a player it considered a good fit in Rod Brind'Amour's system and style of play.

The Canes acquired Guentzel, one of the NHL's most efficient goal scorers and point producers, March 8 from the Pittsburgh Penguins looking to bolster their lineup for a run at the 2024 Stanley Cup. The Canes traded forwards Michael Bunting, Vasily Ponomarev, Ville Kolmuncen and Cruz Lucius in the deal with the Pens for Guentzel and defenseman Ty Smith — the Pens also retained 25% of Guentzel's contract.

Carolina lost in the second round to the New York Rangers, and has faced an offseason with many roster decisions to be made. Guentzel, 29, was due to become a UFA on Monday, when NHL free agency begins.

In 67 games last season — the first 50 with Pittsburgh — Guentzel finished with 30 goals and 47 assists. His Hurricanes totals: 17 games, eight goals, 17 assists and a plus-16 plus/minus rating.

Guentzel, playing on Sebastian Aho's line at Carolina, had four goals and five assists in the Canes' 11 playoff games after producing 58 points in 58 career playoff games in Pittsburgh.

In his exit interview with the media after the Canes' season, Guentzel said: "I loved my experience here. It's a great place to play. It was a new experience. You get used to a spot and it's fun to have a new experience, coming to a place where it's a new challenge."

With the Guentzel situation settled, Tulsky and the Canes will continue to work on trying to keep such pending UFA's as defensemen Brady Skjei and Brett Pesce, and forward Teuvo Teravainen.

The Canes on Sunday made qualifying offers to four restricted free agents: forwards Martin Necas, Seth Jarvis, Jack Drury and defenseman Dylan Coghlan.

News Observer LOADED: 07.01.2024

1316899 Carolina Hurricanes

Lightning close to deal with Jake Guentzel after trading 3rd-rounder to Hurricanes for his rights

By Chris Johnston, Pierre LeBrun and Josh Yohe

The Tampa Bay Lightning got a jumpstart on free agency Sunday by acquiring Jake Guentzel's rights from the Carolina Hurricanes less than 24 hours before the winger was set to hit the open market.

Per league sources, the sides were close on a seven-year deal as of Sunday night. A source close to Guentzel indicated that terms had been agreed upon.

The fact that the Lightning sent a 2025 third-round pick back to Carolina to gain an early negotiating window was already a pretty good indication that they were confident they would be able to reach an agreement with Guentzel on a contract.

Guentzel was one of the top names available in this year's free-agent class — second on The Athletic's big board.

The two-time Stanley Cup winner scored 30 goals and 77 points in 67 games in 2023-24, splitting the season between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Hurricanes.

Carolina hoped to keep Guentzel, offering him an eight-year deal worth \$64 million earlier this week, but elected to move on when he didn't jump at that offer. He can sign for a maximum of seven years with Tampa Bay because he wasn't on the Lightning's reserve list at the trade deadline.

If the Lightning are successful in getting Guentzel signed, it will continue a pretty significant transformation of the team's roster. On Saturday, general manager Julien BriseBois made two cap-clearing moves, sending defenseman Mikhail Sergachev to Utah and forward Tanner Jeannot to the Los Angeles Kings while getting defenseman JJ Moser, prospect Conor Geekie and draft picks back in return.

BriseBois also announced that longtime captain Steven Stamkos would hit the free-agent market Monday, signaling the end of an era for the face of the franchise, who was drafted No. 1 by the Lightning in 2008.

Guentzel would give Tampa another top-six forward option to soak up some of the minutes and offense walking out the door with Stamkos.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.01.2024

1317020 Websites

The Athletic / NHL free-agency targets: 15 best players who were bought out or weren't tendered qualifying offers

By Thomas Drance and Harman Dayal

There tends to be a select group of names added to the unrestricted free-agent list at the last gasp of the NHL league year, and this year was no different.

With the NHL calendar getting set to turn from last season to next on Monday at noon ET, a variety of NHL teams rushed to conduct some



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last-minute business Sunday. It was a busy NHL news day that marked both the qualifying offer deadline and the final practical day of the NHL buyout window.

For those players whose contracts were bought out, or who were non-tendered, they'll become unrestricted free agents, free to sell their services to the highest bidder and join the annual July 1 free-agent frenzy. These are the players that make up what's commonly referred to as the NHL's "secondary market."

For the most part, secondary market players are flawed and are often coming off seasons in which they underperformed. Generally speaking, players in this particular bucket will be available affordably for teams this summer and will mostly be targeted by clubs looking to creatively fill out the bottom end of their lineup with upside bets for next season.

Still, one team's trash can be another team's treasure. The defending Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers are a fine example of this, not only because of how they've worked the waiver wire to find hidden gems like Gustav Forsling, but because their hockey operations department has generally made a habit of targeting non-tendered players and bought-out players to fill out their roster.

The Panthers have had some hits with this approach over the years (Alexander Wennberg, Anthony Duclair and Oliver Ekman-Larsson) and some misses too (Colin White), but it's typically been an avenue for one of the savviest NHL management teams to add affordable value to their lineup.

This is why it's worth our time to comb through the 15 best players who have shaken loose in the week before the market opens. Even if teams were generally more willing to extend qualifying offers this summer than they were during the flat-cap offseasons of the past few years, some surprising names have shaken loose before the market opens capable of helping various teams win games next season.

1. Jeff Skinner

The final three years of Skinner's contract — which carried a \$9 million annual average value — was bought out by the Buffalo Sabres this week.

Skinner has been a mainstay on the Sabres' first line for the past few seasons, finding chemistry with Tage Thompson and Alex Tuch and producing at a solid clip. Coming off a down campaign, it's clear that Skinner is no longer a \$9 million winger capable of driving top-line caliber impact. At a more modest price point, however, following his buyout, Skinner definitely has the skill level and offensive juice to be a useful contributor in the top six on a good team.

2. Blake Lizotte

Undersized, but with one of the highest motors in the league, the Los Angeles Kings decided not to extend Lizotte a qualifying offer ahead of the Sunday afternoon deadline. Now the useful 26-year-old forward will hit the unrestricted free-agent market for the first time in his career.

Lizotte is a perfectly reasonable bet as a low-end third-line center or a high-end fourth-line center for the right team. He's got some serious buzzsaw qualities and two-way value and can help a team drive quality territorial outcomes in the bottom six.

3. Sam Steel

Steel was a terrific bargain find for the Stars last season. The speedy 26-year-old forward excelled as Dallas' fourth-line center because of his pace, puck transportation and competitiveness. He drove strong two-way results and chipped in with nine goals and 24 points in 77 games, which is valuable production from a fourth-liner.

Steel produced at a 35-points per 82 games pace the year before in Minnesota, so there's also the chance he has some low-end third-line upside.

4. Alex Nylander

Nylander was traded midseason to the Blue Jackets and went on a tear down the stretch, scoring 11 goals and four assists in 23 games. Mostly though, he's been a tweener bouncing between the NHL and AHL since being drafted No. 8 by Buffalo in 2016. At his best, he can be a creative, shifty scorer.

Columbus is stacked with middle-six wingers and emerging prospects, though, which made Nylander tough to fit in. Injuries allowed him to play

with Johnny Gaudreau during the season-ending heater, an opportunity that wasn't going to be available with a healthy lineup next season.

On a cheap deal, Nylander could be an intriguing bet to fill a complementary top-nine role next to skilled linemates.

5. Erik Brannstrom

Brannstrom has become something of a tweener, which left him surplus to requirements from an Ottawa Senators perspective.

Brannstrom hasn't developed the sort of high-end offensive toolkit that earns an undersized defender some rope at the NHL level, and he's not gritty or defensively oriented enough to fit most teams' ideal of a third-pair defender. For those teams that are willing to roll the dice on Brannstrom's transitional impact and two-way intelligence, however, he's done really well against tertiary competition in an unstructured environment in Ottawa over the past few years. On the right team and in the right situation, Brannstrom may have more to give than we've seen from him to this point in his career.

6. Nate Schmidt

Schmidt could be a perfect fit for a club seeking a veteran third-pair puck mover.

At almost 33 years old, Schmidt's skating isn't as electric as it was in his prime, but he's still got enough wheels and puck skills to contribute on the breakout. He's versatile (can play both the left and right side) and is well-liked in NHL locker rooms because of his infectious, high-energy personality.

The Jets controlled 55.6 percent of expected goals and outscored opponents 31-23 during Schmidt's five-on-five minutes.

7. Ryan Suter

Age is catching up to 39-year-old Ryan Suter but he can still provide value, especially if it's in more of a sheltered role.

A defensive defenseman with penalty-killing value and sound defensive instincts, Suter played a prominent role on the Stars' blue line averaging nearly 19 minutes per game and absorbing middle-of-the-road matchups. He held up just fine, with Dallas outshooting, outchancing and outscoring opponents during his minutes.

Suter would fit well on a team's third pair as the steady, stay-at-home presence that allows a puck-moving partner to roam.

8. Adam Boqvist

Injuries have stunted Boqvist's development. Drafted No. 8 in 2018 and traded from Chicago in the Seth Jones trade, Boqvist has only played 133 games over the last three seasons. Boqvist is offensively gifted and can quarterback a second-unit power play (scored 24 points in 46 games in 2022-23), but he struggles to defend and is undersized. The Blue Jackets bought him out because they had too many right-shot defenders and his \$2.6 million cap hit was too high.

Boqvist will turn 24 in August, so he's still young enough to be an interesting reclamation project.

9. Nils Lundkvist

Life moves fast.

The Dallas Stars acquired Lundkvist, a former New York Rangers first-round pick, for a first-round pick just 18 months ago. Now, after 119 heavily sheltered games with the Stars, Lundkvist is set to hit the open market.

There are still flaws in Lundkvist's defensive game, flaws that showed even in the lockdown environment he played in under Pete DeBoer in Dallas. But he's still a mobile, athletic and offensively gifted 23-year-old right-handed defender. Given the potential rarity of that profile and his precocious age, Lundkvist should interest any number of teams as a low-cost upside bet on the open market.

10. Cam Atkinson

Atkinson missed the entirety of the 2022-23 season due to a herniated disc in his neck. On his return to action with the Philadelphia Flyers this past season, Atkinson's point totals dropped from 50 in 2021-22 to just 28.



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That drop in production and the structure of his deal made a buyout a no-brainer decision for Flyers management, but Atkinson is still a smart, scrappy power-play weapon. Perhaps — as we saw with Ekman-Larsson last offseason — Atkinson can bounce back and provide value in a depth role after a fully healthy summer and additional time to heal.

11. Jacob Bryson

Bryson blossomed in a depth blue-line role for the Sabres this year. He wasn't worth his \$1.9 million qualifying offer but can be a legitimately useful No. 7/8 defender. He's undersized at 5-foot-9 but makes up for it with strong skating and puck-moving. Most importantly, he cleaned up his defensive play this season.

Bryson's deployment was quite sheltered in his 36 games, but Buffalo limited shots and chances well and surrendered just 1.71 goals against per game during his five-on-five minutes.

12. Jake Bean

Bean had a quality first season with the Blue Jackets in 2021-22, but his form regressed in the latter stages of the Jarmo Kekäläinen era in Ohio.

The 26-year-old is unlikely to develop into a first power-play unit weapon or a top-four puck mover, but his skill level is high, he's big enough to be more than just an offensive specialist and he's versatile enough to play on both the right and left side ably. That should at least make him an intriguing depth add for teams in free agency.

13. Kailer Yamamoto

Yamamoto underwhelmed as a fourth-liner in Seattle, but the right winger has a previous track record of middle-six success in Edmonton. The pint-sized 5-foot-8 right winger scored 113 points in 218 games for the Oilers from the 2019-20 to 2022-23 seasons.

It's unlikely he'll reach that production level again because a large chunk of those minutes were spent on Leon Draisaitl's line, but Yamamoto has the speed and energy to provide useful depth at an extremely affordable price.

14. Noah Gregor

When he's on, Gregor can be a handy fourth-line winger and can also play center in a pinch. He can fly up and down the ice because of his speed, create havoc on the forecheck and log secondary PK minutes. But like many depth forwards, there are also long periods where he's largely invisible. Gregor made an excellent first impression with the Maple Leafs but faded down the stretch and only produced one goal and four assists in his final 35 games.

Gregor makes sense for a team that needs extra competition for a fourth-line wing role, but don't expect much more than that.

15. Filip Zadina

It just hasn't happened for Zadina at the NHL level.

Still just 24 years old, Zadina appears to be running out of runway to cement himself as an everyday caliber top-nine forward on a good team.

Zadina struggled with the Detroit Red Wings team that drafted him at No. 6 in 2018 and didn't really make a dent or earn a significant role on a moribund San Jose Sharks team last season.

Perhaps a winning environment would serve Zadina well, and one hopes that he can find the right organization to help him reach his once immense potential now that he's a free agent. Zadina is skilled and athletic and wouldn't be the first "failed" top-10 pick to reinvent himself as a useful depth player, but he'll need to be far more consistent in his work rate to bring about that outcome.

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The Athletic / Four of 5 Canadian world junior players charged with sexual assault cut by NHL teams

By Chris Johnston

Four of the five Canadian world junior players charged with sexual assault stemming from a June 2018 incident in London, Ont., have been cut loose by their NHL teams after not being tendered a qualifying offer before Sunday's deadline.

Carter Hart of the Philadelphia Flyers, Dillon Dubé of the Calgary Flames, and Michael McLeod and Cal Foote of the New Jersey Devils are all now unrestricted free agents. They had each been on paid leave from their teams since late January, when they were ordered to surrender to London Police Service to face sexual assault charges.

A trial date has yet to be set. It was up to each team to decide if they wanted to issue a qualifying offer by Sunday's 5 p.m. ET deadline to retain the NHL rights of those players, and the Flyers, Flames and Devils all decided against it.

Had they done so, and the offers been accepted (which they almost certainly would have been), the players would have continued to be paid while remaining on leave as the legal process played out through what could end up being all of next season.

There are currently no restrictions around their ability to sign with another team right away, deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed to The Athletic on Sunday night. But it will likely be difficult for any of them to do so, given all of the uncertainty around their situations.

The NHL and NHL Players' Association had discussions in recent weeks about potentially freezing the status of the players until a trial was held, according to league sources familiar with those talks, but couldn't reach an agreement on how to make that work.

It's possible that Hart, Dubé, McLeod and Foote explore opportunities to continue their careers in Europe — as Alex Formenton, the fifth player charged alongside them, did the last two seasons in Switzerland with HC Ambri-Piotta.

Formenton's NHL rights will remain with the Ottawa Senators through July 1, 2027, because he received a qualifying offer that he didn't accept following the 2021-22 NHL season and was then moved to their reserve list.

The five players are facing charges for a June 2018 incident inside a room at the Delta London Armouries Hotel following a Hockey Canada Gala at which the world junior team was celebrated for its gold-medal win.

Two counts of sexual assault were brought against McLeod, and one each for Dubé, Foote, Formenton and Hart.

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The Athletic / NHL free agency 2024: What's every team's biggest need ahead of July 1?

By The Athletic NHL Staff

NHL free agency is less than 24 hours away, slated to open at noon ET on Monday.

Who'll be shopping for what when the bell rings? The Athletic asked its NHL staff.

Here's each team's biggest need.

Anaheim Ducks

Top-six scorer and top-four defenseman

General manager Pat Verbeek laid out his offseason shopping list after the season ended, and the Ducks need some upgrades if they want to make a push to at the very least play consequential games next spring. Frank Vatrano scored 37 goals, but their next highest returning goal producer was Troy Terry with 20, and you can't expect Vatrano to match last season's output. Convincing free agents that the Ducks are ready to



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start moving past their rebuild won't be easy, but there's \$33 million of cap flexibility to work with. The Ducks may not want to go long-term on a right-handed shot on defense, but there's a hole to fill. Up front, Verbeek convinced Alex Killorn to come west after a long run with Tampa Bay. Could he somehow do the same for Steven Stamkos? They won't want to get into the high-stakes Sam Reinhart poker game if he's in play, though. — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins

Center

If Steven Stamkos has not re-signed with the Lightning, the Bruins should be at the front of the line. Stamkos has the presence and the pedigree to improve the Bruins at center. He can also play wing. Stamkos would improve the Bruins' offense instantly. The Bruins could also look at Elias Lindholm as a Patrice Bergeron-like two-way center. Other options include Chandler Stephenson and Max Domi. — Fluto Shinzawa

Buffalo Sabres

Top-six forward

The Sabres' only NHL addition during draft weekend was Beck Malenstyn, who projects as a fourth-liner. Buying out Jeff Skinner creates another hole in a forward depth chart that already needed an upgrade. No-trade clauses have made trades difficult for general manager Kevyn Adams, so free agency could end up being the likeliest path to addressing this need. Steven Stamkos would be a dream target, but Tyler Toffoli, Jake DeBrusk and Patrick Kane could be other options. — Matthew Fairburn

Calgary Flames

Defensive help

Even if Oliver Kylington gets re-signed, the Flames could use a defender (particularly on the right side) to shore up their defense. Expect them to be linked to names like Tyson Barrie and Matt Dumba over the next few days. — Julian McKenzie

Carolina Hurricanes

To stop the bleeding

The Hurricanes have so far re-signed only two of their pending unrestricted free agents — Jalen Chatfield and Spencer Martin — and have several big names seemingly heading out the door. That makes for a lot of work. Carolina has just four NHL defensemen signed right now, and the potential losses of Jake Guentzel (whose rights were traded to the Lightning on Sunday), Teuvo Teravainen, Jordan Martinook and Stefan Noesen make for holes up front. The Hurricanes could use assets from a Martin Necas trade to plug two or three spots, but Carolina will probably be looking for some depth additions and perhaps a bigger name or two in free agency. — Cory Lavallette

Chicago Blackhawks

Top-six winger to play with Connor Bedard

The Blackhawks obviously have a lot of holes to fill, perhaps including a defensive partner for Kevin Korchiński and a backup goalie. But the lowest-scoring team in the league last season desperately needs some help up top for Connor Bedard, who spent most of last season playing with Philipp Kurashev and a rotating cast of left wings that included Rem Pitlick, Nick Foligno and Anthony Beauvillier. Chicago has the cap space to vastly overpay a free agent but doesn't want to hand out any term beyond two or three years. The Blackhawks had interest early on in Jake Guentzel, but general manager Kyle Davidson this week seemed to be trying to temper fans' expectations. Old friend Teuvo Teravainen could be an option for the top six, but it's possible a healthy Taylor Hall returning will be the Blackhawks' biggest "addition." — Mark Lazerus

Colorado Avalanche

Secondary scoring

The Avalanche's biggest need entering free agency is secondary scoring behind the elite top of the lineup (Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Cale Makar). With the uncertainty around Gabriel Landeskog and Valeri Nichushkin, and Jonathan Drouin still unsigned heading toward free agency, the Avs could use a scoring winger. But figuring out the cap

situation to make that work will be complicated because of Landeskog and Nichushkin. — Jesse Granger

Columbus Blue Jackets

Veterans

The Blue Jackets aren't likely to go big-game hunting on July 1, but new general manager Don Waddell wants to add a veteran presence on both ends of the ice. One name to keep in mind is Sean Monahan, who will likely hit the market after splitting last season between Montreal and Winnipeg. It might help that Monahan and Jackets forward Johnny Gaudreau remain tight from their many seasons together in Calgary. The Jackets may also be in the market for a third-pairing defenseman, especially if they decline to extend a qualifying offer to Jake Bean. — Aaron Portzline

Dallas Stars

Right-shot defensemen

The Stars ended the season with nothing but question marks on their right side, with Jani Hakanpää missing extended time due to injury, Nils Lundkvist falling out of favor with the coaching staff again (perhaps permanently) and Chris Tanev a pending unrestricted free agent. Yes, Miro Heiskanen can play on the right side, and it may be something the Stars need to continue, but even with that, they need at least one true top-four defenseman, whether they tap into the free-agency market or gauge the trade winds. — Saad Yousuf

Detroit Red Wings

Top-six winger

Detroit hasn't given up on trying to keep Patrick Kane, but whether it's him or someone else, the Red Wings have a hole for a scoring forward high in the lineup. Kane was a big source of offense last season, so there is real incentive for Detroit to figure something out with the future Hall of Famer. If not him, perhaps Jonathan Marchessault or Steven Stamkos (if either make it to market) would be fits for a team that came close last season to snapping an eight-year playoff drought. — Max Bultman

Edmonton Oilers

Middle-six forwards

The Oilers are set at the top of their forward ranks with some combination of Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl (provided he's back), Zach Hyman and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins making up the first line. But that quartet are four of just seven forwards under contract, plus restricted free agent Dylan Holloway. The Oilers have a decent chance to bring back their third line from the Stanley Cup Final — Adam Henrique, Connor Brown and Mattias Janmark. Even if all three pending unrestricted free agents do return, though, they could use another addition. Viktor Arvidsson is someone they've been linked to and is set to hit the market. The Oilers are weakest at right wing, so he'd be a good fit provided he can stay healthy. — Daniel Nugent-Bowman

Florida Panthers

Defensive depth

The champs are in good shape with a top pair of Aaron Ekblad and Gustav Forsling, but there's work to do behind them, especially if Brandon Montour signs elsewhere. Re-signing pending unrestricted free agent Oliver Ekman-Larsson would be a start, and Florida's track record of turning also-rans into real contributors is impressive, but they need a piece or two. — Sean Gentille

Los Angeles Kings

Middle-six scoring winger

The Kings' blueprint has been more about depth than star power, but that's only gotten them so far. There isn't an appetite to pull back and move into a retool, but the trade of Pierre-Luc Dubois and an increase in the cap has given them some financial flexibility they didn't have last season to beef up a couple of positions. A reunion with Tyler Toffoli has been a popular topic, and the veteran has turned into an import scorer for a few teams. On defense, Brandt Clarke is poised to step in for the departing Matt Roy, but the Kings can upgrade from Andreas Englund on the left side. Ryan Suter could be a low-cost option after being bought



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out by Dallas. Or could there be another reunion with an ex-King? Alec Martinez, anyone? (Unless he's bound for retirement.) — Eric Stephens

Minnesota Wild

Top-six winger

There's no doubt the Wild will be relying on internal improvement from Marcus Johansson, Freddy Gaudreau and Ryan Hartman after down years, but they also need to look for a top-six winger in free agency or trade, despite their limited cap space and flexibility. Here's the problem: They want to sign somebody to a one- or two-year deal, which immediately takes them out of the running for top free agents. David Perron could be a fit. Patrick Kane would be a dream. They could also pursue a trade for somebody like Columbus' Patrik Laine if the Blue Jackets would eat half of his \$8.7 million cap hit for the final two years of his contract. — Michael Russo

Montreal Canadiens

Short-term forward help

The Canadiens don't want to overcommit to an older player who might wind up blocking the young players in their deepening prospect pipeline, but they would like to be competitive next season and view the forward position as one that could use some immediate help to that end. The free-agent market is one way to address it, though it is generally difficult to find effective free agents willing to take shorter contracts. The Canadiens still have young defensemen available on the trade market after striking out on that front at the draft, so there are different avenues available to them here. — Arpon Basu

Nashville Predators

Difference-making forward

Two of the most enticing possibilities, Sam Reinhart and Steven Stamkos, may not actually be attainable. Chandler Stephenson could be a nice pickup — and has history with Barry Trotz. Signing him would allow Ryan O'Reilly to move down the lineup and give the Preds some actual depth down the middle. That doesn't address the need for a dominant No. 1 center, but that's probably going to require a trade of major significance. — Joseph Rexrode

New Jersey Devils

Defenseman

The Devils moved John Marino at the draft. They're rumored to be in on the Hurricanes' Brett Pesce, as well as the Jets' Brenden Dillon. Either would go a long way to shoring up a defensive core that is promising but young. New Jersey could also look to add at wing. — Peter Baugh

New York Islanders

Top-six forward

But they'll only get one by trading someone off the roster. The Islanders have less than \$6 million in cap space to work with and still a few holes on the edges of their roster. To really get in the game on a player who could play alongside Mat Barzal and Bo Horvat, general manager Lou Lamoriello will have to move out some money first. — Arthur Staple

New York Rangers

Top-six wing

The Rangers have long been looking for a fit alongside Chris Kreider and Mika Zibanejad on the top line. Jack Roslovic was not the answer after coming in at the deadline. New York has some short-term cap flexibility, but general manager Chris Drury also has to plan ahead for next summer, when Igor Shesterkin and Alexis Lafrenière are both due for big raises. What happens with Jacob Trouba in the coming days will go a long way in determining the Rangers' cap space. — Peter Baugh

Ottawa Senators

Right-shot defenseman

Earlier this week, Ottawa's biggest need would have been in goal, but the Senators addressed that by acquiring Linus Ullmark from Boston. Now the priority for general manager Steve Staios is to land a right-shot defenseman to play in the top four. Staios could try to target the likes of Matt Roy, Sean Walker, Brandon Montour or Alexandre Carrier, who are

slated to become unrestricted free agents on Monday. Failing that, he could potentially move one of his left-shot defensemen — such as a Jakob Chychrun or Erik Brannstrom — to try and facilitate landing a righty on the back end. — Ian Mendes

Philadelphia Flyers

Power-play help

There's a decent chance that the Flyers don't do anything when the free-agency period opens up. They certainly aren't going to be in the market for a major addition. Still, after finishing dead last in the league in power-play percentage for the third season in a row, perhaps there's a cheap forward option who could help give that part of their game a boost. A net-front presence, in particular, is something that they lacked last season with a man advantage. — Kevin Kurz

Pittsburgh Penguins

Bottom-six forward help

The Penguins aren't in a great spot. They badly need depth scoring, among other things, but only have around \$7 million in cap space. Kyle Dubas said on Friday that he won't be handing out long-term deals in free agency. The Penguins are hoping to catch lightning in a bottle in a couple of one-year deals. — Josh Yohe

San Jose Sharks

Power-play quarterback

The good news is the Sharks have \$31 million available in cap space, per CapFriendly, and no high-priced extensions to work out. The bad news is they're not the most attractive NHL destination these days. Now, the possibility of Macklin Celebrini and Will Smith taking flight as their top two centers might change that dynamic, but even general manager Mike Grier conceded that he may have to overpay for a significant free agent. Fabian Zetterlund scored 24 goals this past season and William Eklund has the potential to level up, but the Sharks need scoring along with a puck-moving power-play quarterback. Grier is open to offering term but wants to keep a deal to four years. Perhaps Sean Walker or Shayne Gostisbehere are targets on defense. It's not a great UFA market beyond the top forwards and they'll want max term. But Tyler Bertuzzi could hit the market. Jeff Skinner was just bought out. Or what about an Anthony Duclair reunion? — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken

Goal scoring

The Kraken's third season was a huge setback mostly because they weren't able to manufacture goals consistently. This is a structurally sound, hard-working team with a fair bit of depth, but it's a lineup that's lacking in elite talent. Some top-six support will be necessary if Seattle is going to rebound back into the mix in the Pacific Division next season. There are a variety of options for the Kraken to consider, including recently bought-out forward Jeff Skinner, who previously worked with Kraken general manager Ron Francis in Carolina. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

Strategic second-wave pickup

When Blues GM Doug Armstrong was discussing the start of free agency on Monday, he said that his team probably wouldn't get serious until Tuesday or Wednesday. It's not that the Blues don't have holes to fill. It's just that while in a retool, they're not looking to make any significant upgrades in free agency. So they're going to let the first wave of players pick their spots and then find out if any reasonably priced ones fit into their plan. If the team does go shopping, a third-line center or a bottom-six forward with some grit is likely on their list. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

Scoring forward

The Lightning found a way to clear cap space with the Mikhail Sergachev and Tanner Jeannot trades. Now management has to find a way to carefully use it. The biggest need is a scoring forward — whether it's Jake Guentzel, whose rights were acquired Sunday, or Steven Stamkos returning or another bonafide goal scorer. Swapping Sergachev for JJ Moser may help cut costs, but it takes away a reliable source of offense from the blue line. That puts even more emphasis on the forward



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group, so Tampa Bay can't afford to lose Stamkos or comparable production. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs

Defense!

The Leafs took a step in this direction when they acquired the negotiating rights to Chris Tanev during Day 2 of the draft. Assuming they sign him, Tanev will check off one box for the Leafs on the right side. Ideally, they would like to add another right-shooting defender to play in the top four and potentially a third-pairing type on top of that (if the money is there). General manager Brad Treliving is determined to overhaul the defense above all else this summer. — Jonas Siegel

Utah HC

More help on the blue line

This may sound counterintuitive given that Utah made two big adds on the blue line Saturday, trading for Mikhail Sergachev and John Marino, and also signed Juuso Valimäki and Michael Kesselring to extensions in the past few days — good work considering Utah had zero defensemen under contract at the start of the week — but if the team can add another piece in free agency, it will be a serious playoff threat in its first season in its new home. Brandon Montour maybe? Given how aggressive Utah was Saturday, nothing is off the table anymore. — Eric Duhatschek

Vancouver Canucks

Dynamic top-line forward

The Canucks finished the season as a top-10 offense, but goals and shots and quality five-on-five looks were incredibly difficult for this club to come by once the playoffs began. If they are going to meet their ambitions next season and become an inner-circle contender, adding serious offensive punch into the top-six mix is required. The club is expected to pursue Jake Guentzel aggressively if he hits the open market but will have to pivot if he's headed elsewhere or doesn't make it to market after having his rights traded to the Lightning on Sunday. It's probably not enough, after all, for this club to merely land a quality top-six forward. If the Canucks are going to make sure they're bringing more than a knife to a gunfight the next time they encounter the likes of Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl in a playoff series, a star-level scoring forward is going to be required. — Thomas Drance

Vegas Golden Knights

Top-six winger

Whether it's through extending this past season's leading scorer and pending UFA Jonathan Marchessault or turning to the market, the Knights need a top-six winger. As of now, Vegas is great at center but has only Mark Stone and Ivan Barbashev as proven top-six options under contract. Acquiring Alexander Holtz in a trade with New Jersey on Saturday helps, but they'll still need to add at least one more winger. — Jesse Granger

Washington Capitals

Defensive depth

General manager Brian MacLellan, who'd already traded for Pierre-Luc Dubois, said ahead of the draft that he was hoping to add another winger and a veteran goalie. Andrew Mangiapane and Logan Thompson wound up fitting the bill perfectly. The other element MacLellan mentioned that he hasn't yet addressed is someone to change the defensive mix. A fresh left-shot defenseman in the third pair would look great. — Sean Gentile

Winnipeg Jets

Defense

Winnipeg has one star defenseman in Josh Morrissey and a top-four capable partner for him in Dylan DeMelo. Beyond that, there's Dylan Samberg, who might be ready to attempt top-four minutes; Neal Pionk, who's struggled in that role; and a collection of possibilities that include prospects Elias Salomonsson and Ville Heinola, third-pairing-capable veteran Nate Schmidt and Logan Stanley. Winnipeg needs someone to replace Brenden Dillon, who's expected to sign elsewhere, at minimum. Matt Roy would be the dream unrestricted free agent, and Brett Pesce is another player whose style meets the Jets' needs. Otherwise, Winnipeg's

options are on the trade market or on players who make it past July 1 free agency. — Murat Ates

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The Athletic / NHL free agency: 10 value buy targets as alternatives to expensive UFAs

By Thomas Drance and Harman Dayal

The relevant question in the NHL free-agent frenzy isn't "Will teams overpay to land the top available free agents?" It's "by how much?"

More mistakes are made on July 1 than on every other day of the NHL calendar combined.

While free agency provides an opportunity for teams to add talent to their lineup without acquisition cost, it's also a day of open bids, long-term commitments and intoxicating competitiveness. The result, oftentimes, is a feeling of regret for NHL hockey operations departments.

The best players on the open market, the name brands for the marquee, are those most likely to stimulate season ticket purchases. These are players who fill the building, excite a fan base and make headlines, even in nontraditional hockey markets. When you factor in those risks that are inherent in a hard cap system with fully guaranteed player contracts, however, it's sometimes the imperfect generic brand players who are ultimately the better fit on great teams.

As we look ahead to free agency, The Athletic wanted to spotlight 10 of the top available name-brand unrestricted free agents and produce a list of more affordable alternative options for teams to consider this offseason.

These more affordable "value buy" options are also lower quality and less desirable across the board, but that's sort of the point.

Note: All contract projections are sourced from Evolving-Hockey.

Star-level top-line winger

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Jake Guentzel (7 years, \$9.7 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Jonathan Marchessault (3 years, \$6.9 million)

Jake Guentzel is an elite two-way winger, one of the NHL's most frequently overlooked superstars.

He's a big game player, as we've seen repeatedly in the Stanley Cup playoffs. He's a top-line caliber rate scorer, a brilliant playmaker and a bona fide play driver.

And if there were any questions about whether he could do it away from Sidney Crosby, he's answered them. After he was acquired by the Carolina Hurricanes at the trade deadline this past spring and removed from Crosby's wing, Guentzel still produced at a 100-point pace between the regular season and the playoffs.

The 30-year-old is the top unrestricted free agent on the market and he should be. Given the way cap pressures work and serve to deflate the salaries of elite-level talent, he's not even a buyer-beware candidate in free agency. Sure, there's always risk in signing a 30-year-old player to a max-term contract. Any team lucky enough to sign Guentzel, however, is likely to have a relatively efficient contract on its hands, given his all-around ability and star-level impact.

That said, it feels like there's no hype whatsoever around Jonathan Marchessault in the lead-up to the opening of the free-agent market and there really should be. Marchessault, 34, is four years older than Guentzel and isn't as well-rounded. Guentzel is the superior playmaker and the superior defensively player.

From a goal scoring perspective, however, Marchessault has produced five-on-five offense at a top-30 rate over the past three seasons and



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regularly carries a sky-high shot rate. His work rate is off the charts, too, and despite his stature, he can play a heavy game and elevate his form late in the year — as he proved during the 2023 playoffs when he won the Conn Smythe.

Marchessault is coming off a career year in which he scored 40 goals, and despite his age, he shows absolutely no signs of slowing down. The gap between him and Guentzel just isn't as large as perception would indicate, and yet Evolving-Hockey projects there to be a roughly \$50 million difference in total compensation between the two on their next contract.

Teams that miss out on Guentzel shouldn't hesitate to pivot to Marchessault. He can be very nearly as impactful, at an even more palatable price.

Top-six two-way center

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Elias Lindholm (7 years, \$8 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Alex Wennberg (3 years, \$4.4 million)

Elias Lindholm is an excellent all-around center, but a contract in the seven-year, \$8 million AAV range would be extremely risky.

Nobody is doubting his enormous value as a defensive workhorse. He's an elite faceoff winner, a penalty-killing stud and can match up against top players because of his smart positioning and disruptive stickwork. The problem is that Lindholm's offensive results have declined hard the last two years, making him unlikely to produce at a rate commensurate with the first-line center price tag he's going to command.

Lindholm scored 64 points in his first season away from Matthew Tkachuk and Johnny Gaudreau in 2022-23 and fell to 44 points in 75 games this season. This wasn't just a brutal stretch of luck, either; Lindholm's offensive play-driving metrics cratered in 2023-24.

Graphic via HockeyViz

Alex Wennberg fits the mold of a classic shutdown middle-six center. Lindholm can still excel as a 2C, whereas Wennberg is best suited as a 3C, but the gap between them as players isn't as wide as the discrepancy between their respective contracts will be.

Wennberg was tasked with very difficult matchups against the opposition's best players in Seattle, averaging nearly 19 minutes per game across three seasons with the Kraken. The 6-foot-2 Swede delivered impressive results in that daunting role, posting above-average defensive numbers for suppressing shots and scoring chances against, in addition to logging a huge penalty-killing role. A vanilla pass-first offensive player, he was only one point back of Lindholm in five-on-five scoring this season.

Lindholm is miles better in the faceoff circle, more valuable on the power play and could bounce back offensively in the right situation, but Wennberg's even-strength impact at both ends of the ice was very comparable in 2023-24.

Second-line winger

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Tyler Toffoli (3 years, \$6.1 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): David Perron (1 year, \$2.4 million)

Tyler Toffoli is one of the smartest offensive wingers in the sport.

What he might lack in foot speed, Toffoli makes up for with clever finishing, sneaky passing ability and a still extant ability to win battles and help his team control play five-on-five. He's also a genuine power-play weapon, adept at the net front and has a long history of solid playoff performances, even if it didn't go well for him in the postseason as a rental player with the Winnipeg Jets this spring.

In terms of production, Toffoli is a high-end second-line rate scorer five-on-five. And although he's getting into his mid-30s now, he is still a solid bet, even on a high value unrestricted free agent contract, to add punch to a good team's top six.

David Perron is four years older and is unlikely to command as significant a contract or nearly as much term as Toffoli will. Where Toffoli is a high-

end second-line rate scorer, Perron is a more standard second-line point producer, although he absolutely can still produce offense at a legitimate top-six level.

Like Toffoli, Perron's foot speed has diminished with age. Perron, however, is still an absolute beast beneath the hashmarks and plays a small area game down low as well as anyone in the league.

Because of the 35-plus contract rules, the market may hesitate to give Perron the sort of term he probably should warrant coming off a near 50-point season with the Detroit Red Wings. What rival suitors may see as a concern, a discerning buyer should view as an opportunity. Perron still has the intelligence and heavy game to help good teams win games in a second-line role.

Heavy, complementary scoring winger

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Jake DeBrusk (5 years, \$5.9 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Michael Amadio (4 years, \$3.3 million)

Jake DeBrusk is an excellent complementary scoring winger.

There's some heaviness and straight-line predictability to his game when he's on, he's a legitimate first-line rate goal scorer and, used in the right way, he can add the sort of snarl and offensive pop that all teams need to win games in the NHL.

His occasional bouts of inconsistency are well-documented, although he's put together three consecutive productive seasons. Those months where his work rate flagged earlier on in his career have largely disappeared too. He'll be a very interesting add for somebody on the open market.

Michael Amadio, however, shouldn't be slept on as a glue guy who can produce points in a variety of roles up and down the lineup. A right-handed shooter who has very quietly produced goals at a top-line rate over the past three seasons with the Vegas Golden Knights, Amadio is a natural center with good size who can play either wing position or in the middle of the lineup.

Amadio is not at the same level as DeBrusk in terms of his one-shot scoring ability or straight-line speed, but he's got a winning track record and is a solid all-around, understated player who brings a lot of similar attributes. Most importantly, he projects to earn half as much on his next contract.

Versatile middle-six forward

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Adam Henrique (3 years, \$4.8 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Danton Heinen (4 years, \$3.6 million)

Adam Henrique is a very handy middle-six complementary scorer. The 34-year-old veteran can play either wing or center, is a clinical finisher around the net, kills penalties and is a reliable bet to contribute 20-25 goals.

Teams are often looking to fill their middle-six forward spots without breaking the bank, though, and that's where Danton Heinen is intriguing. Recent history would suggest his next deal may clock in far cheaper than what Evolving-Hockey projects — his last three contracts have all been one-year deals, none of them higher than a \$1.1 million AAV.

Heinen can contribute secondary offense (17 goals and 36 points in 74 games), is reliable defensively, kills penalties and slid up and down Boston's top nine because of how well he can adapt his game to hang with more skilled linemates. He doesn't drive play on his own but has strong forechecking chops and high enough offensive IQ to excel as the third wheel on a line.

Heinen's overall point totals aren't that high because he's limited on the power play, but he's produced 1.96 points per hour at five-on-five over the last three seasons. That's a bona fide top-six clip that slots in the same neighborhood as the likes of Henrique, Tyler Bertuzzi, Bryan Rust and Trevor Moore among others.

Third-line scoring winger



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Name Brand Target (projected contract): Vladimir Tarasenko (3 years, \$5.5 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Jason Zucker (3 years, \$3.2 million)

Vladimir Tarasenko is a far cry from the elite player he was in his prime, but he can still add offensive sizzle to a club's middle six.

The 32-year-old right winger has scored 50-55 points in each of the last two years. He's got a wicked release on his shot, is capable of elevating a team's second unit power-play and has won two Stanley Cups. The red flag on Tarasenko is that he's a defensive drag. It doesn't always look that way by the eye test, but his defensive metrics are very alarming over the last three seasons or so.

Jason Zucker won't match Tarasenko's pure shooting, offensive talent or point production. Zucker is a far more well-rounded play-driver, however, and can pack a strong third-line punch at a significantly more affordable price. He's a very quick skater, constantly disrupts plays/wins battles and can mesh with skilled linemates (he scored 27 goals in 2022-23 riding shotgun with Evgeni Malkin).

Relentless bottom-six winger

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Stefan Noesen (3 years, \$3.3 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Kiefer Sherwood (2 years, \$1.8 million)

A high-energy, big-bodied forward with good hands around the net, Stefan Noesen emerged as a quality bottom-six piece for the Hurricanes. Noesen is a tenacious worker, adds a heavy presence and has scored 13-14 goals and 36-37 points in back-to-back seasons. He thrives in the dirty areas of the offensive zone and emerged as a productive net-front power-play producer.

Many teams can't afford to shell out a \$3.3 million AAV, however, for a player who filled a fourth-line role with power-play duties. At almost half the cap hit, Kiefer Sherwood could check many of those same boxes minus the net-front power-play specialist skill set.

Sherwood is a ball of energy, a relentless forechecker and scored 10 goals and 27 points in 68 games on Nashville's fourth line. All but one of those points came at five-on-five, which is impressive. Sherwood's line delivered sparkling underlying numbers during the regular season, with head coach Andrew Brunette trusting them to match up against Vancouver's top line during some points of the playoffs.

Physical second-pair defender

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Nikita Zadorov (3 years, \$4 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Brenden Dillon (2 years, \$3 million)

Nikita Zadorov is going to command way more than his \$4 million AAV, three-year contract projection indicates. Vancouver reportedly went as high as offering a \$5 million AAV, according to TSN's Darren Dreger, which wasn't enough because the Canucks announced they won't be resigning him. There's a high probability that the term on his next deal will be closer to five or six years rather than three as well.

Zadorov is a unicorn with his 6-foot-6, 248-pound frame, thunderous hitting ability and smooth skating. Despite all of those physical gifts, Zadorov has never averaged 20 minutes per game or higher in any of his 10 NHL seasons because his reads and decision-making, both with and without the puck, can lead to loud mistakes from time to time.

Listed at 6-foot-4, 225 pounds, Brenden Dillon is an effective, affordable No. 4/5 defenseman for a fraction of the cost. The hard-nosed 33-year-old veteran offers throwback qualities with his physicality (ranked 12th in the NHL for hits this season) and willingness to stick up for teammates, while still providing fringe top-four value.

Dillon ranked No. 4 among Jets defensemen in ice time this season, averaging nearly 19 minutes per game. He generated strong defensive numbers in terms of suppressing shots and scoring chances while also eating the second-most PK minutes of all Jets defenders.

Defensive-minded second-pair puck mover

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Matt Roy (5 years, \$6.1 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Alexandre Carrier (4 years, \$4.4 million)

A slick skating hybrid shutdown defender, Matt Roy has been an underrated driver of the Los Angeles Kings' suffocating defensive game over the past several seasons. Last year, as the Kings parked the bus with extreme conservatism, Roy's defensive game hit a new level as he combined with Vladislav Gavrikov to form one of the league's stingiest pairs.

Standing 6-foot-2, but known more for his positional play and two-way IQ than his physicality, Roy is second only to Chris Tanev among right-handed defensively oriented defenders poised to hit the open market on July 1. Given how difficult it is to identify good right-handed blueliners, Roy is in line to earn a massive raise on the \$3.15 million AAV deal that he's played on for the past three seasons.

Alexandre Carrier is also likely to be in demand, and for many of the same reasons. Carrier has become one of Nashville's most trusted hybrid defensive defenders over the past few seasons and shares a number of stylistic similarities with Roy with one key exception. Whereas Roy is 6-foot-2, Carrier is listed at 5-foot-11.

Carrier plays bigger than his size and is likely to have a similar impact on his next team as Roy, but his height is going to make him a more budget-conscious option for teams on July 1.

Power-play specialist third pair defender

Name Brand Target (projected contract): Shayne Gostisbehere (3 years, \$5.2 million)

Value Buy Target (projected contract): Justin Schultz (3 years, \$3.2 million)

Shayne Gostisbehere is one of the most consistent and underrated point-producing defenders of the past decade.

Provided that he's healthy, he's likely to give his team 10 goals (or more) and 40 points (or more). He'll need to be sheltered a bit at five-on-five and the defensive deficiencies are well-documented, but Gostisbehere can fill the net from the back end and run an effective power play.

Justin Schultz isn't nearly as prolific, but he's got the skill to run the power play, has a habit of elevating his game in the playoffs and has actually become somewhat steadier as a two-way defender over time. He's a couple of years older than Gostisbehere, but the gap in the actual value that Gostisbehere and Schultz will provide to their next teams is almost certainly smaller than the expected gap in the valuation of their next contracts.

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The Athletic / Inside Macklin Celebrini's NHL Draft moment, forged from his family's love and expertise

Marcus Thompson II

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LAS VEGAS — Macklin Celebrini sat up and leaned forward, a big smile breaking across his face. It was just shy of 10 a.m. on Friday in this suite at the Venetian. He and his father were doing interviews. The infamous "hill" story came up.

"I was pissed," he said, then dove into the story. "So it was at the end of a long week. And we just worked out for like two hours hard ..."

His dad interrupted. The "hill" story from the summer of 2022 is important. It's a window into who they are, how they function, why Macklin was hours from fulfilling his dream of becoming the top pick in the NHL Draft. But the 18-year-old had forgotten a small but central detail. So pops asked if he could start this one.



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"OK, yeah," Macklin says, reclining back on a soft brown couch.

So Rick Celebrini, 56, the highly regarded athletic trainer who plies his expertise as the vice president of player health and performance for the NBA's Golden State Warriors, dove right in. Dad explained the pattern he'd concocted for training Aiden, 19, eldest of the three Celebrini boys, and Macklin. It consisted of speed and power work early in the week, while they're fresh. Then he grinds them towards the end of the week.

Aiden and Macklin could tell what kind of session they'd have based on how pops entered the home after work. Most often, it's a warm greeting. Hugs and hair-ruffling. Queries about their day. But those days when work frustrations survive the drive home, as can happen when existing behind the scenes in the NBA, dad is more hard. Fewer words. Dour vibes. A little grumpy, as he put it. His greeting is more a simple, "Let's go." Aiden and Macklin would look at each other, knowing the training session would be tough.

The story of "the hill" was one of those days.

At the end of the workout, they run up and jog down this hill at their house. They typically finish workouts with five minutes on the hill, 10 max. But on this day, 10 minutes grew to 12 minutes. And 12 to 15.

Asking when a workout will end is a great way to keep it going. They'd long ago learned that lesson. And dad is notorious for saying "one more" and not meaning it. Always one more rep. One more time. One more drill. So they've learned to just keep going until he says stop.

"So they're looking at me," Rick says. "But they know not to ask either. And they could tell the kind of mood I was in. So they're going. Now we're up to 18 minutes. And they're looking at me. Not saying anything. ... They're not going to quit."

The boys took turns rallying. Aiden would surge ahead while Macklin faded. Then Macklin would find another gear and push through while Aiden faded. The entire time, they looked into their dad's eyes for a glimpse of mercy.

After 30 minutes, Rick finally called it off. They collapsed.

They eventually got up and started walking home. But Macklin mumbled under his breath.

"Now we're f—," Macklin said with a laugh, recalling his audacious moment.

"And I go," Rick chimed in, "'What did you just say?' And he goes, 'Now we're f— for the week.' I go, 'Let me tell you something. On your first day of camp, they're going to grind you. ... They're going to have you out there for two hours. You think you're going to get out of it? You think you're not going to come back the next day and do it again, and do it again? So you better learn. If you want to be a pro, you gotta be able to handle this stuff and suck it up.'"

Intensity is a genetic marker in the Celebrini family. Their surface is relaxed and warm. They smile frequently, lead with kindness. The family next door.

But once that pilot light is sparked ...

The preview is in their eyes. They all have it. A piercing intensity. The way they look you straight in the eye. It's caring and respectful. It also declares a willingness to be unflinching.

Macklin has it. Humility washes over him when he hears how Draymond Green, the notorious NBA star, watched him play in person and was practically salivating over Macklin's physicality and fire.

"He watched a game that we weren't playing very well," Macklin said, referencing his Chicago Steel's 4-2 home loss to the Madison Capitols in January 2023, his USHL days. "It was just a tough game in general and there was a lot of emotion. I was really frustrated so I think that's why I was more physical."

On the ice, Macklin is more wizard than wild. He's a great skater with elite instincts. His game is about grace and electricity and feel. He's so smart on the ice, on the puck and off. And he competes, which is why many scouts can't find a significant flaw despite him being so young.

But Green's eyes didn't lie. Macklin's got some of that in him. And Macklin knows from whence it came.

His father is highly regarded in the Warriors organization. He's also known for being willing to lock horns with superstars, like Green, and get in the trenches with the likes of Stephen Curry. Celebrini's passion activates his vast knowledge.

"They're a lot more similar than Macklin is willing to admit," Robyn, Macklin's mother, said. "The intensity of their personalities. Their competitiveness. ... He was a little wild man. We were always just trying to find healthy outlets for his energy."

That same intensity is what makes him special. It's how he got here, on the stage of the Sphere. How he's the No. 1 pick in the NHL, the new cornerstone of the rebuilding San Jose Sharks.

Macklin Celebrini

Yes, Macklin is talented. He works hard. His love for hockey is programmed into his central nervous system. But he made it here because he's got a fire in his belly. He wants the smoke. He had a dream and enough ferocity to go after it.

He left home at 14 to play for Shattuck-St. Mary's School in Minnesota. He split from his brother and bestie in junior hockey. For college, he went further east to Boston University. For some time now, he's carried the weight of expectation, worn the hype like a backpack. The Celebrini Draft arrived, and he was still every bit worthy, unmoved from his focus. It takes something more than talent, something special, to handle his status.

So, on this biggest day of his life to date, as he's reflecting on the source of so much of his excellence on the ice and off, he appreciates his father. Right?

"I'll never admit it to him."

Not with words. But on this day, of all days, his confession was in clothes. Macklin dressed just like his father: navy blue polo, khaki pants, comfy white sneakers.

"He dressed like me," Macklin said. "I was up early."

"I was up and at Starbucks at 6 a.m.," Rick fired back. "You weren't up earlier than me."

It was just after 1 p.m. and Rick was fully dressed in a pristine navy blue suit with a white shirt, purple tie and white pocket square. Aiden and Macklin had on their white dress shirts, trousers and socks. The fun began when it was time to put on a tie.

The cameras following the Celebrinis wanted to seize the moment when dad helped Macklin with his tie. Aiden slipped away from the commotion to an open mirror by the entrance of the suite. The Boston University defenseman, who was selected by his hometown Vancouver Canucks in the sixth round of last year's draft, only needed to see what he was doing to get his tie together.

He took a glance over at the other side of the room and grinned with pride. As he worked on his knot, he thought about the makeshift NHL playoffs he and his brother would hold in the basement. They'd each pick eight teams, clear out some space and get active with their little sticks. They'd play each other over and over, each game representing a playoff matchup, until one team remained in their bracket.

"Basement hockey was so fun," Aiden said. "I won most of the time. I won't reveal who the teams were, but we used to go at it. We kept up the tradition until about 13."

"Now look at him," he said, looking again at Macklin. "I'm so proud of him. He deserves all of this."

Macklin and Rick Celebrini

Rick Celebrini helps son Macklin with his tie ahead of the NHL Draft. (Marcus Thompson / The Athletic)

While they worked on the tie, R.J., 11, the youngest of the Celebrini children, stared out of the 17th-story window. He was the life of the pre-draft festivities, with his persistent smile, timely quips and fly tan suit with white Nikes and a purple tie like his dad. Four feet of handsome.

Aiden, now fully dressed, joined R.J. in staring out of the window. "Are you inspired by this?" Aiden asked his little brother. R.J.'s "yes" came out fast, emphasized with a head nod.



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"This is going to be you one day."

They can take all the time they need. Because Macklin didn't like his tie knot. Back to the mirror for Take 3.

It was like a sitcom watching them joust over this tie. Macklin, the politely irritated teen. Rick, the eager-to-help dad whose affection has broken containment. Both plagued in the moment by their perfectionism.

Charlie, 15, the princess of the Celebrini clan, returned to the room with her mom. An audible gasp greets Robyn, who's in a sleeveless black dress and white open-toe heels, with a smile that matches the moment.

The Celebrinis don't dress up often. They've spent most of the last decade on the go, galavanting around the land, following their sons' hockey games and Charlie's tennis matches.

Seeing mom dressed to the nines stopped them in their tracks.

"Ohhhhh," R.J. said. "That's what took you so long."

Another critical trait Macklin gets from his dad is attention to detail. Rick has engrained it in them from their earliest days. Doing the drills right. Eating breakfast. Packing a bag. Macklin remembers him telling them John Wooden's story about how he taught his team how to put on socks to avoid blisters.

"Since we were younger, it has been about details," Macklin said. "Even the little things. That stuff adds up and will actually make a difference. That's one of the things he's told us throughout our whole lives."

"You can only really get it when you're older. And you start to understand how important it is."

That's why the "hill" story is so important. Because it was the son understanding the father's lessons well enough to take such a bold stand.

They've been groomed to deem rest and recovery important. Rick was from the era of going hard. He pushed and he pushed. But he stresses to them to value and prioritize replenishment.

To Macklin, the hill story was a violation of that indoctrination.

"I want you to understand this workout," Macklin said. "It wasn't like normal hills."

The Celebrini residence is a ranch in Livermore, a little over 30 miles northeast of San Jose. Known for its vineyards and its cowboy history, Livermore sits in a valley halfway between mountain ranges. It gets hot starting in late spring. By the summer, leather seats in the car become hot plates grilling bare thighs.

The driveway up to the house has an incline. But so does the path from the entrance of their property to the driveway. The hill included scaling both inclines.

"It's 100-degree heat. It was, like, run up and jog back. Lunges up, jog back. Run up, jog back. Lunges up — and he just kept going," Macklin said, rubbing his legs as if they were hurting thinking about it.

"I'm never opposed to work. I'll work. But it was after, like, three hours on the ice. Plus another two-hour lift and a workout. And then we went into this hill. We still had Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday left. So I was looking at it like, 'I'm f---. I can't do this anymore. I'm legit not going to have any energy. We're fucked. Now we can't do anything.'"

Macklin speaking up illustrated both his intensity and his understanding of the science his father had been teaching him.

In many ways, Macklin seems destined to be a star. His parents are athletes and both still look like they can play. He's had a big brother leading the way, a companion and inspiration. And because of his father's connections, he's been exposed to the behind-the-scenes process of professional athletes. Steve Nash, whose career Rick was instrumental in prolonging, is a family friend.

All that Rick has learned is funneled into his children. He grew up a typical Canadian hockey diehard. He played soccer, collegiately and professionally. He's had his career ravaged by injury. He became an experienced physiotherapist as a result. His expertise in sports medicine and science, and how athletes tick, has taken him to the Olympics, to Major League Soccer, to the NBA.

"Every athlete that he works with," Macklin said, "you hear them say, 'Your dad is a genius, pretty much.' But you're like, 'Whatever. He's dad.' But we all know he's the best at what he does. Everything he does is for a purpose. And he will never say his way is the right way, but I think his way is the right way. And it works."

Then, with a straight face, and as matter-of-factly as possible, Macklin made one thing clear.

"But I'll never say it publicly."

Macklin Celebrini

The Celebrinis took the elevator down together. They walked through the Venetian lobby, ahead of the cameras, past the golden statue in the center, through the eyes and whispers of onlookers. Their collective elegance matched the gold and marble overtones of the Venice-inspired decor.

They got into a black Mercedes van. The ride to the Sphere was relatively quiet, conversations confined to their intended targets. If they were excited, if the magnitude of what was about to happen was settling in, you'd never know it. As competitive and fiery as they are, from hockey to chess to debates, overt isn't their style. The Celebrinis prefer their emotion tucked in the inside pocket, not on their sleeve.

But they feel it.

As the van pulled up to the Sphere, the reward became increasingly tangible. A father validated.

Rick is the first to admit how hard it is playing both roles. The heart of the loving father can clash with the expertise of the diligent trainer. The hard lessons from the trainer don't always sit well with the dad.

He's pushed too hard before. He's not pushed hard enough before.

"I sometimes, privately, remind him, like, 'OK, you're taking that a little too far,'" Robyn said, standing in the back of the Sharks' suite at the Sphere. Macklin is off doing his rounds with the media. Rick is locked in a conversation with Joe Thornton, the Sharks legend who introduced Macklin as the No. 1 pick. "And he's really open to that. ... But he's always put his relationship with the kids first. It's just he's so passionate. He can be pretty tough."

Robyn's expression changed. She tilted her head back. Rests her hand on her chest. Her countenance shifted to confidence.

"He doesn't scare me," she said, breaking character with a hearty laugh. "I handle him just fine."

Rick, without hesitation, says Robyn makes it all work. When the Warriors hired Celebrini in 2018, the family stayed back in Vancouver for a year. She was practically a single mom running the home, shuffling four kids to various events. She's the family heartbeat.

One thing he and Robyn won't compromise on is character. The dad was hard on Macklin after one game this past season.

"At Providence," Macklin said. "Maybe the worst game I've played in the last five, six years."

The issue wasn't his performance. It was his attitude. Rick was disappointed in the energy and approach of his superstar son. Celebrini has passed down those lessons from Warriors head coach Steve Kerr and Curry about playing with joy, never being guided by anything other than the love of the game and the privilege to play.

"So this game," Rick said, "you never see this from him, but he came out and he was frustrated from the get-go. He was just really negative. Obviously, we're all prone to that. It was just a situation where he needed to hear it afterwards. That part was unacceptable."

Macklin nodded the whole time his father explained. He already knows. One of the constant lessons from his dad is about being a good person, being governed by integrity and gratefulness. He's old enough now to appreciate it.

That's part of what makes this day so extraordinary. Not just because Macklin was the No. 1 pick in the draft. But because he developed into a player and person worthy of the mantle. The Celebrini name is now internationally known and not just because of their father. But because of the son, a worthy ambassador of their name.



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"He has matured so much," Robyn said. "It's unbelievable. Just the human being he evolved into. We're just so proud of him."

The "hill" story doesn't end on the hill. But in the house.

Eventually, dad's fiery speech ended. Aiden and Macklin walked away. Everybody showered and got ready for dinner.

Dad was at the table when he heard the door open behind him. While he had justification for his tough love, especially with his son's pro potential, Rick knows himself and his tendencies. He knows his kids. He knows what they can handle, how they respond. They've been granted the freedom to be their full selves, which for Macklin means being chill, and kind, and funny, and occasionally combustible. This was one of those moments where dad expected the tension from the hill to make it to the dinner table.

But Macklin, instead, wrapped his arms around his seated father from behind. The son squeezed tight enough to convey a love they don't often declare.

"And he gives me a kiss on the cheek," Rick said. "And he's like, 'Thanks, da-da.'"

The sentimentality, especially among the Celebrini men, is most often tucked away behind the chiseled family jawline and intense eyes. They don't lacquer on the heartwarming.

"I don't remember that," Macklin said, fighting off a smile as he barely hung onto the bit. "At all. He made that part up."

The Athletic LOADED: 07.01.2024

1317025 Websites

ESPN / 2024 NHL draft grades: Which teams aced, whiffed their picks –

Rachel Doerrie

The 2024 NHL draft was a spectacle in every sense of the word. Count me among those who wouldn't mind seeing the event held at Sphere going forward. I understand wanting to spread league events around, but when you hit a grand slam like the NHL did here, don't mess with what works.

In terms of the selection process itself, some teams had fantastic drafts, extracting value with each selection, while other teams left value on the table with the talent available.

When considering a grade for each team, the totality of their work was considered: quality of players drafted, selection value and value derived from trades. Here's our grade for every front office, with insights on particular high-value picks and trades (as well as questionable ones).

Jump to a team:

ANA | BOS | BUF | CGY

CAR | CHI | COL | CBJ

DAL | DET | EDM | FLA

LA | MIN | MTL | NSH

NJ | NYI | NYR | OTT

PHI | PIT | SJ | SEA

STL | TB | TOR | UTA

VAN | VGK | WSH | WPG

ATLANTIC DIVISION

Boston Bruins

Grade: C

When you have only four draft selections and three are in the 100s, it is difficult to come away with much.

Dean Letourneau was a quintessential Boston pick, even if it was a bit of a reach. The potential for Tage Thompson 2.0 has to be enticing for a franchise that needs help down the middle. He's going to take a few years, but there is a real chance Letourneau is a unicorn, and Boston took that swing.

Elliott Groenewold, Jonathan Morello and Loke Johansson don't have NHL projections, but you don't expect that from midround picks. It's a long shot for those three to make it, but they are fine bets.

Buffalo Sabres

Grade: B

The Sabres managed to have another quality forward fall into their laps. Buffalo likely should've traded the No. 14 pick for immediate help, but Konsta Helenius should play sooner than many people expect. The two-way driver will be a key piece of the Sabres' future.

Adam Kleber and Brodie Ziemer were good bets and should play NHL games in depth roles. Buffalo got good value with Ryerson Leenders in the seventh round; I expected him to be one of the first goaltenders off the board. It is fair to be disappointed in the Sabres for not acquiring immediate help, but Helenius is a player to be very excited about for the future.

Detroit Red Wings

Grade: B

The Red Wings need a high-end scorer, which many believed would be Jake Guentzel in free agency. It now seems like it may be Steven Stamkos.

In terms of picks, they left value on the board with Michael Brandsegg-Nygard, but got good value in the Ondrej Becher selection, and I liked the Max Plante selection. Brandsegg-Nygard should be a middle-six NHL player and an effective one at that. There's nothing to write home about, but nothing to be too disappointed in, either. A perfectly fine draft.

Florida Panthers

Grade: C

The Panthers had the best week in the NHL, as they won the Stanley Cup on Monday just four days before the draft. (And had quite a celebration on Sunday.)

Linus Eriksson and Matvei Shuravim are fun projects with NHL upside. Simon Zetter has an intriguing package of skill and physicality combined with a two-way game. The path for each of these players is long, and none have confident NHL projections, but they are intriguing in their own rights. When you've won the Stanley Cup, you aren't expected to have the best draft, but Florida made some nice selections.

Montreal Canadiens

Grade: A

The Canadiens were big winners on Friday night, getting both Ivan Demidov and Michael Hage. They are excellent value, and will be key pieces in the Canadiens' top six. Getting the second-best player in the draft at No. 5, and a top-15 player in the 20s is tidy business.

The sentimentality of the Aatos Koivu pick (he's Saku's son) plays well with the fans, and he has a real shot to be an NHLer. Other selections with value and NHL attributes include Logan Sawyer, Owen Protz and Tyler Thorpe. It wouldn't surprise me if this draft class yielded four regular NHLers, including two difference-makers. Demidov has a chance to be a superstar, and that alone should be very exciting to Habs fans.

Ottawa Senators

Grade: C

One thing was made perfectly clear this weekend: The current Senators regime has adopted the modus operandi of building a team that's hard to play against, compared to their predecessors. Unfortunately, that includes drafting players who fit that mold ahead of other highly skilled players.

Carter Yakemchuk over Zeev Buium, Zayne Parekh and Anton Silayev was head-scratching, but he should be a top-four defender in the NHL.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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They reached on other selections too, and there isn't a ton of upside through the rest of the class.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Grade: B-

Tampa Bay didn't have a selection until the fourth round, which means they started behind the eight ball. However, they could've drafted the likes of Luke Misa or Aron Kiviharju with their selections; both players went less than five picks later and were considered excellent value. Hagen Burrows and Jan Golobic have the best chance to be NHLers if their skating can develop to NHL level.

Though the Lightning draft picks left something to be desired, their trade execution was much better. The real story was the deck-clearing and subsequent acquisition of Jake Guentzel's negotiating rights. Adding Conor Geekie to the fold in the Mikhail Sergachev swap gives Tampa Bay a blue-chip prospect who will be ready sooner than anyone they would've drafted this weekend. J.J. Moser is a nice player who will fit in a fourth or fifth defenseman role at a team-friendly price.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Grade: C

The Leafs identified that a few of their first-round targets would be available in a trade-back scenario and were able to acquire a second-round pick by sliding back.

Had the Leafs nabbed EJ Emery, we're looking at a B- grade. They are banking on upside and that Ben Danford develops more offensive attributes to build on his excellent defensive game. Regardless, the Leafs needed a solid right-handed defender, and that's exactly what Danford is.

Trading for the rights to Chris Tanev solves the immediate issue and buys them time with Danford. There is little data on the rest of the class, but it is clear the MO was to get some big bodies into the pipeline, with six of eight selections coming in at 6-foot-2 or taller.

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

Carolina Hurricanes

Grade: A-

Stop me if you've heard this before: The Carolina Hurricanes had a great draft.

Dominik Badkina, Nikita Artamonov and Justin Poirier were fantastic value selections. Using the 27th pick to acquire the selections to draft Badkina and Artamonov was A+ maneuvering. Artamonov was expected to be a late-first-round pick, and Badkina's stock was on the rise as well. Nabbing both along with Noel Franssen and Justin Poirier was quality work for new GM Eric Tulsky and his staff.

Columbus Blue Jackets

Grade: B

The Jackets couldn't pull off the Martin Necas trade at the draft, but Cayden Lindstrom is going to be a rock-solid second-line center for years to come. A one-two punch of Adam Fantilli-Cayden Lindstrom brings size, speed, physicality and skill.

Getting Charlie Elick in the second round was good value as well. The Blue Jackets had a solid prospect pool entering this weekend and added two pieces that will be quality NHLers.

Perhaps the Blue Jackets will use their plethora of prospects to acquire more immediate help. Luca Marrelli has a fair NHL projection as a bottom-pair defender, with the potential to be a solid transition player. The first two picks are the ones to be very excited about.

New Jersey Devils

Grade: B-

The Devils had a busy week, and had a fine draft, though they are likely disappointed that their 10th overall pick was unable to net them a player who could help them immediately.

Anton Silayev is fair value at No. 10 and fits the style that the Devils like on the back end. They want players who are difficult to play against to complement their skilled players, and Silayev is exactly that.

Herman Traff and Matyas Melovsky are good swings who provided value in the draft class. The trade for Paul Cotter that included Alexander Holtz was one they felt needed to be made, and the John Marino trade makes sense if they intend to sign Brett Pesce in free agency.

New York Islanders

Grade: A-

For what they had to work with, the Islanders had an excellent draft.

Cole Eiserman at No. 20 was the best value selection of the first round outside of Demidov. The Isles have needed scoring help for a while, and Eiserman is going to score goals in the NHL. After years without a first-round selection, Eiserman is someone Isles fans should be thrilled to have in the fold.

Jesse Pulkkinen and Kamil Bednarik are solid selections who drew positive reviews in the industry. Overall, a great weekend for the Isles.

New York Rangers

Grade: C

Walking away with EJ Emery must feel really good. Emery was a defenseman other teams were eyeing, hoping his lack of offensive production would see him slide to the mid-30s. Getting one of the best transition and shutdown defenders in the draft at No. 30 is great for New York.

Outside of that, it was largely disappointing for the Rangers, who left value on the board in favor of players lacking NHL projections. With four picks, three in the later rounds, you want to swing on skill; the Rangers did not.

Philadelphia Flyers

Grade: C

The Flyers left a lot of value on the table by passing on Buium and Helenius in favor of trading back and ultimately selecting Jett Luchanko. He's likely to be a middle-of-the-lineup player who plays in all situations. He's worth getting excited about because of the development progression in his draft year.

Jack Berglund and Spencer Gill are most likely to make the NHL out of the rest of the draft class, with both topping out as depth players. This was an opportunity for Philly to draft higher-ceiling players, and they opted for safety instead. It wasn't great, but not horrible.

Pittsburgh Penguins

Grade: B

Harrison Brunicke and Tanner Howe were solid value, and should be good middle-of-the-lineup players at their respective positions. Mac Swanson in the seventh was the most valuable selection outside of the first two rounds. He's small, but he's got a lot of markers that lead me to believe he can become an NHLer.

Lots of value extracted by the Pens in this year's draft. The acquisition of Kevin Hayes raised eyebrows, but they got a second-rounder for their trouble, and perhaps playing with two Hall of Famers can help produce offensive contributions from the big veteran. An interesting weekend, but the Penguins should be happy with their additions.

Washington Capitals

Grade: B+

Their draft picks get a C+, their trades get an A, for a combined grade of a B+.

Terik Parascak is an intriguing selection as a raw player, and if he continues his development curve, he'll be a solid contributor for Washington. Cole Hutson and Leon Muggli have NHL projections and Washington got decent value with both selections.

Acquiring Andrew Mangiapane for what amounted to Beck Malenstyn is tidy business. Solidifying the goaltending tandem by acquiring Logan Thompson completed a good week for the on-the-fly rebuild in the nation's capital.

CENTRAL DIVISION



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Chicago Blackhawks

Grade: A-

The only reason this isn't an A+ is because Chicago left value on the board with all of their first-round selections. Getting either Ivan Demidov or Cole Eiserman (or both) would've boosted the haul.

Artyom Levshunov will undoubtedly be an impactful defenseman in the NHL, and fans should be excited about him. Sacha Boisvert and Marek Vanacker have fair chances to be middle-six contributors for Chicago, with Boisvert's ceiling being the highest. There was good value in the John Mustard, AJ Spellacy and Jack Pridham selections.

Chicago is clearly trying to build the fastest team in the NHL and will likely have at least three NHL players from this class, with an outside shot at five or six. Pretty tough not to be happy with that, even with the value left on the board.

Colorado Avalanche

Grade: C

The Avalanche were on the prowl for goalies in this draft, and Ilya Nabokov was one of the best options available. Goalies are volatile and hard to project, so taking a few if you believe your pipeline lacks a solid goalie prospect isn't the worst idea.

Their positional selections, however, left value on the board. William Zellers has a long runway and a decent ceiling, but the lack of play at a top level is concerning. Nothing to write home about for the Avs, who will likely need to wait four or five years to find out whether one of their goalies pans out.

Dallas Stars

Grade: C+

In three years, when we're discussing Dallas hitting on players in the late first or middle rounds, Emil Hemming at No. 29 in 2024 is going to be a player we mention. The Stars continue to extract value out of their selections in that area.

Outside of that, the Stars had two picks in the late rounds that are unlikely to be NHL players. Trading the negotiating rights to Chris Tanev when it became clear he'd priced himself out of Dallas was shrewd, too. It wasn't a busy weekend for the Stars, but Hemming is a quality player for the pipeline.

Minnesota Wild

Grade: A

The Wild would be getting an A if they'd done nothing but draft Zeev Buium, Ryder Ritchie and Aron Kiviharju. The value extracted, particularly with Buium and Kiviharju, cannot be ignored. There is a real chance that Minnesota drafted two top-four defensemen and a flashy middle-six forward.

Getting Buium at No. 12 was a top-five steal in this draft, as there is a real chance he is Brock Faber's partner for the foreseeable future. Trading Vinni Lettieri for Jakub Lauko and a fourth-round pick swap helps the Wild get younger and swing on a player with a higher offensive ceiling. Overall, the Wild have to be happy with their trip to Las Vegas.

Nashville Predators

Grade: B

The Predators got good value with a few of their selections and took swings on players with higher ceilings.

Egor Surin was a bit of a reach for me, but he's likely to become an exciting NHL player, so it should be fine. Teddy Stiga and Miguel Marques were high-value picks, and both have serious NHL potential.

It is clear Nashville values skills and opts for high ceiling over safe players, contributing to their value selections. There's not as much confidence in the players they selected making the NHL, but they have the potential to be impact players if they hit their ceilings.

St. Louis Blues

Grade: B+

I really liked the Blues' draft. They needed defensemen and spent their first three picks on the position. Adam Jiricek has a chance to be a heist at No. 16 when the dust settles. There's a real path for him to become a steady top-four defender with top-pairing upside.

Lukas Fischer was fair value at No. 56 and could be a bottom-pairing defender with some development. The real value came with Adam Jecho and Tomas Mrsic, who should've been second-round selections. Both players have legitimate chances to be NHL players; the Blues may have quite a few players from this class in their lineup down the road.

Utah Hockey Club

Grade: A+

There is no other grade you can give Utah here. On the totality of their work, it was a brilliant weekend for the NHL's newest club.

Using their plethora of picks over the next few years to trade up and acquire a second first-rounder was good business. Both Tij Iginla and Cole Beaudoin were good selections that will be key pieces of Utah's forward core.

Losing Conor Geekie hurts but was palatable given the prospect pool depth. Acquiring Mikhail Sergachev and John Marino is tidy business, as both will be key players on Utah's blue line. They're going to surprise opponents next season.

Winnipeg Jets

Grade: C

Without a first-round pick, and with 2022 first-rounder Rutger McGroarty potentially on the way out via trade, it wasn't a great weekend for the Jets. They were unable to trade McGroarty at the draft, which is something they wanted to accomplish.

Alfons Freij is a solid selection at No. 37 and should be a good middle-pairing defender in the NHL. Kevin He is intriguing and could develop into a depth player. Otherwise, nothing to write home about for Winnipeg.

PACIFIC DIVISION

Anaheim Ducks

Grade: B+

The Ducks had two first-rounders and shocked the hockey world (and the player) when they selected Beckett Sennecke with the third overall pick. Sennecke will be a solid NHL player, but that was a bit of a reach.

Stian Solberg will be a solid NHL defender and was a big riser in the draft. Someone was going to take him ahead of defenders with better projections, but if anyone should be trusted to develop a defender to his full potential, it is the Ducks.

The Maxim Masse and Tarin Smith selections provided solid value, and both have decent NHL projections.

Calgary Flames

Grade: A

In terms of value and quality of players selected, Calgary may have had the best draft. Zayne Parekh, Matvei Gridin, Andrew Basha, Henry Mews, Luke Misa and Jacob Battaglia were fantastic selections and have legitimate shots to be NHL players in varying roles.

Parekh is their future power-play quarterback who is better defensively than many credit him. Basha, Mews and Misa were high-value selections who all have NHL projections with varying confidence. Flames fans should be very happy with how their team did in Vegas.

Edmonton Oilers

Grade: B-

The Oilers had a mixed-bag draft. Taking a swing on Sam O'Reilly with the last pick of the first round may prove to be a good one given his performance in the playoffs for the London Knights. His development has been fun to watch, and London is a good spot for him to develop into a player who will be a middle-six contributor in the NHL.

Eemil Vinni was a solid value pick and one of the best goaltenders in the draft class. Dalyn Wakely had an excellent season as an overage player



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and is worth the late-round shot. He's physical, wins puck battles and saw his production more than double season over season. If he's a victim of COVID development delay, the Oilers may have gotten a sneaky steal here.

Los Angeles Kings

Grade: B

After trading Pierre-Luc Dubois to Washington, the Kings were able to extract decent value for their selections. Liam Greentree, Carter George and Jared Woolley are all intriguing prospects who provided value.

Greentree brings a lot to the table as a modern power forward who should fit well with L.A.'s roster going forward. George is someone the industry was high on, with many pointing out that he has the tools to be a solid NHL goalie. Woolley is another player who flew under the radar because he played Junior B until midway through the season. He's expected to play a much bigger role for the London Knights next season. The Kings should feel pretty good with their selections.

San Jose Sharks

Grade: A+

Anytime you're adding two cornerstones to your lineup, you've had a great weekend. Add in the value of Igor Chernyshov and Leo Sahlin Wallenius -- who should be good middle-of-the-lineup players -- and the Sharks added quality pieces to their organization.

The Sharks' pipeline needed defense, and they were able to grab at least two players that should be reliable NHLers; in Sam Dickinson's case, they added a potential difference-maker. When you're coming home with a future top-line center and top-four defenseman, you've had a great weekend.

Seattle Kraken

Grade: B+

Seattle would've been better served taking one of the quality defensemen available to them at No. 8, but Berkly Catton's offensive tools and ceiling were too tantalizing. He's going to create and score in a top-six role at the NHL level; the Kraken should be confident in that. They have a lot of young, two-way players, and Catton brings dynamic offensive skill.

Julius Miettinen is a good selection with third-line potential. Jakub Fibigr should've been long gone by the time the Kraken selected him at No. 202, and while he doesn't have a strong NHL chance, he has a better chance than a lot of players who went before him. A good weekend for the Kraken.

Vancouver Canucks

Grade: B-

The Canucks got good value considering they didn't have a selection to make until the third round.

They strayed from their typical MO of functional toughness in favor of soft skill. Melvin Fernstrom's production in Sweden this season indicates he's got a fair shot to play in the NHL if his skating improves. Riley Patterson was a good bet in the fourth round, with good speed and flashes of offensive upside. Anthony Romani was great value in the sixth, even as an overage player. The offensive tools are there, and the underlying numbers suggest potential to become a late-round steal.

Vegas Golden Knights

Grade: B

The hosts certainly got down to business at the draft.

Trevor Connelly is one of the best prospects in the draft on skill, but that's just half the story. This pick will be closely monitored and scrutinized given accusations that Connelly made racist comments on and off the ice.

Their trades netted them swapping out Logan Thompson for Akira Schmid as well as Alexander Holtz for Paul Cotter, while netting an extra third-round pick. That's good asset management. Vegas gets younger in both positions and hopes that Bruce Cassidy can unlock the potential of 2020 No. 7 pick Holtz.

Combine the draft and the trades together, and it's a net positive weekend for the Golden Knights.

ESPN LOADED: 07.01.2024

1317026 Websites

ESPN / Buzz from the NHL draft: Celebrini, Stamkos, Guentzel, more -- ESPN

Kristen Shilton

The 2024 NHL draft saw many teams select players who have instantly jumped to the top of their prospect pipelines. And for the San Jose Sharks, not only did they get a new top-six center in Macklin Celebrini, but a long-term power-play quarterback and minutes-eating defenseman in Sam Dickinson.

Meanwhile, the Utah Hockey Club brought in two new veteran defensemen in trades -- Mikhail Sergachev and John Marino -- while the goalie carousel continued spinning, with Logan Thompson and Akira Schmid finding new homes.

With free agency set to begin at noon ET on Monday, what else were executives and other NHL insiders discussing in Las Vegas? Here's the latest buzz, setting up the next wave of trades and a pivotal free agent market:

Will Macklin Celebrini go pro next season?

The San Jose Sharks were locked in on taking Macklin Celebrini No. 1 overall with the franchise's first-ever top draft selection. But even after landing Celebrini, there's a question as to when he'll actually join the NHL ranks. Celebrini just completed a dominant freshman season at Boston University that made him the youngest-ever winner of the Hobey Baker Award as the NCAA's top skater. It's possible Celebrini will return to BU for a sophomore stint given no one has said officially that a jump into the Sharks' lineup is imminent.

Celebrini himself told reporters on Friday that he doesn't have a timeline in mind to make a decision about going back to BU, either. And it would be a collaborative process with San Jose anyway in determining whether he's ready to start what projects to be a successful NHL career.

One scout said it would be a "shock" though if Celebrini weren't playing for San Jose next season. While there has been debate over Celebrini's status as a "generational" talent or not, he's still viewed at a similarly high level with potential to have an immediate impact.

"If [Celebrini] wants to be in the NHL, and the Sharks can see his development is there, it only makes sense to get going," the scout said. "You picked him for a reason and it's to build around him now."

The key will be ensuring Celebrini is fully prepared for that transition. San Jose has a long road ahead getting back to contender status and the worst thing the Sharks could do is rush Celebrini along.

"He's going to be a good player for a long time," the scout continued. "There's no reason he can't start showing that at the NHL level now if that's what he ultimately feels ready for."

There may not have been many fireworks at the draft itself (save for, you know, those created by Utah and Tampa Bay), but expectations are that free agency itself will be busy -- and intriguing -- from the start.

Jake Guentzel, Jacob Trouba and Steven Stamkos were hot topics in particular over the weekend, because of how unique each situation is. Even before Lightning GM Julien BriseBois confirmed as much to the media, it was clear Stamkos was going to wade into free agent waters come Monday. Where will the Bolts' captain go, and what would a team be willing to offer the veteran -- who even at 34 has shown he's capable of being a difference-maker?

"Wouldn't surprise me to see [Stamkos] get multiple offers he would actually consider," one exec said. "Term is the thing there."

Rumblings about whether Tampa Bay cleared the decks to try and reel in Guentzel -- and what that deal might look like -- kept on going throughout



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Day 2. On Sunday, the Lightning traded for Guentzel's negotiating rights, to give them a head-start on any other team.

The Lightning are also preparing to extend top-pairing defenseman Victor Hedman and will have other potential deals to make, which only adds to the curiosity around what they could offer Guentzel.

"If any team can somehow make it all work, it'll be Tampa," one agent joked.

The purported Trouba trade to Detroit never did come to fruition at the draft, despite reported interest on both sides to get it over the line. Trouba has until Monday to submit his 15-team no-trade list, and that could impact where GM Chris Drury can ship Trouba -- and his \$8 million cap hit over the next two seasons.

We won't have all the answers until Monday (or beyond). But there was a sense that many teams wouldn't be holding back going after the big fish on the board.

Teams feeling the NHL schedule crunch

Most years there's some sort of buffer time between the end of the NHL playoffs and when the draft and free agency get rolling. That was not the case this season.

The Florida Panthers and Edmonton Oilers didn't wrap up their Stanley Cup Final series until June 24. The draft in Las Vegas was on June 28-29, and then of course July 1 is a busy day on the calendar from there. Teams had to get strategic given their entire staffs would be convening in one location (Vegas) right before expecting to be back in their home cities to carry out free agency duties.

Some clubs simply opted to stay put in the desert and go back later in the week when the frenzy died down. And there was a definite weariness about how this year's playoff schedule had dragged along more than others.

"I really think it has thrown some people off," one general manager said. "Hard to explain exactly, but even the conversations you'd be having usually going into free agency haven't been as wide-ranging yet, maybe just because everyone's felt more disconnected this spring."

He also thought a lack of conversation might have been why there weren't more player trades made during the draft.

"Usually you'd expect more action, but it didn't feel like [teams] were engaged as much in that way," the GM continued. "I don't know. Just a weird year in that respect."

Contemplating the big decentralized draft questions

Sphere hosted what's slated to be the final fully in-person draft for the NHL, as the league prepares to follow in the NFL's footsteps with decentralized drafts from here. In this setup, the team execs will be making calls from their home cities which, given how this year has gone schedule-wise, would be a nice reprieve for some.

That has of course created conversations around where the NHL would hold its event that will, going forward, include only the prospects themselves along with fans.

One executive (jokingly?) suggested Walt Disney World as an ideal location (although logistically that would be ... something). But regardless of where the event actually takes place, there was still palpable enthusiasm to see how successfully it might play out.

"There's a lot fewer distractions, obviously," the executive said. "Here you've got all the music and videos blasting, and tons of people sitting around because you want to bring everyone, but you wind up having [team personnel] just sitting around for a long time. They can do that at home."

A decentralized draft would include just one or two representatives per club, provide prospects with a Gary Bettman photo opportunity and give them the chance to visit their new team's facilities at a later time.

"We'll see how the first one goes," the exec continued. "But I think we'll like it."

ESPN LOADED: 07.01.2024

1317027 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Sam Reinhart, Panthers agree to eight-year deal

Sportsnet Staff

Frank Seravalli joined Sportsnet Central to discuss what to expect from the Maple Leafs this free agency, what's next for Steven Stamkos, and where contract talks are with Patrick Kane and the Red Wings.

Sam Reinhart has been rewarded for a huge career year with a new contract.

Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported that Reinhart and the Florida Panthers agreed upon an eight-year contract. As the deal was signed before midnight ET on June 30, the Panthers were able to give him the maximum term.

Financial terms were not immediately known.

Reinhart set career highs with 57 goals and 94 points this season, while helping the Panthers to win their first Stanley Cup in franchise history. He scored the game-winning goal in Game 7 against the Edmonton Oilers to clinch the Cup.

The 28-year-old is coming off a three-year, \$19.5-million contract he signed with the Panthers shortly after being acquired from the Buffalo Sabres in 2021.

The West Vancouver native was selected second overall by the Sabres at the 2014 NHL Draft and played seven seasons for the club.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.01.2024

1317028 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL's Top 12 UFAs of 2024: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox

Deadlines spur decisions and as the opening of the free agent market neared, the late Sunday evening and early Monday morning hours (out east) were full of activity. A few of the bigger names on the list of pending UFAs were taken off the market, while rumours swirled about the next step others may take.

Sam Reinhart, previously atop our board, re-signed for the maximum eight-year term with the Florida Panthers before the midnight deadline to do so.

And though not officially announced yet, Jake Guentzel, our No. 2, is well down the road to signing a seven-year deal with Tampa Bay after the Lightning acquired his rights from Carolina. It's anticipated that will be announced before the market opens.

Meantime, Patrick Kane re-signed an incentive-laden contract with the Detroit Red Wings for a \$6.5 million AAV -- and Detroit may be more active yet when the doors open on July 1.

With those names now off the list, here's a rundown and ranking of hockey's best impending unrestricted free agents, plus the latest buzz circulating about their future before the market opens at noon ET, 9 a.m. PT.

1. Steven Stamkos

Age on July 1: 34

Position: Left wing / Centre

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$8.5 million

The latest: Though the Lightning haven't been as eager to get Stamkos signed to an extension as some other core players when he was last up for a deal in 2016, or now in 2024, there still seems to be a chance he could stay there -- just as he did on June 29 eight years ago.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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With the Lightning trading for, and reportedly on the verge of signing Guentzel for seven years, the fact nothing official was announced on free agency eve might indicate Tampa Bay is still working away on Stamkos.

"I think part of the reason why they haven't revealed or have been so cautious about revealing some of those (Guentzel) details is because they're still grinding on Steven Stamkos," Frank Seravalli said on Sportsnet Central. "I think there's still some hope on their part, I think there's still some hope on the part of Steven Stamkos and his camp that they can find a way to work something out."

However, that's not the most likely outcome anymore.

Days before, Pierre LeBrun of The Athletic reported that Tampa tried to do something with Stamkos that they attempted with Alex Killorn: offer a long-term deal to get him his money, but with a smaller AAV. Killorn, of course, signed for four years and a \$6.25 million AAV with Anaheim instead. For Stamkos, LeBrun believed the similar offer was for eight years and around a \$3 million AAV.

At the draft Lightning GM Julien BriseBois indicated with certainty that Stamkos would head to market.

"My responsibility is to see what's best for the Lightning organization, and Steven has to do what's best for him, his career and his family. So, unless something changes between now and July 1 — and it doesn't look like it will — we will get to July 1," BriseBois said.

Coming off a 40-goal season, the 34-year-old Stamkos still has a lot left in the tank and there will no doubt be a long lineup of suitors should he actually get to the market this time.

2. Jonathan Marchessault

Age on July 1: 33

Position: Right wing / Left wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$5 million

The latest: The Conn Smythe-winning Marchessault is an original Misfit integral to the defending champions' off-ice culture and on-ice success. No doubt, in a cap-free world, the sides would be content to extend their relationship beyond this season.

Yet one only need to look as far as Reilly Smith, GM Kelly McCrimmon's 2023 cap casualty, to see the line between sentiment and business.

It's hard to imagine Marchessault in any other NHL jersey at this point. He's become a face of the franchise. But, perhaps it's time to start pondering it.

Interviewing Marchessault in March, he made it clear that the value of his next contract motivated his performance. (He crushed a career-high in goals, with 42, the most of any UFA left.) So, too, was the chance to win again.

"I want to give a good future for my kids, right? That's what drives me, family wise," said the father of four.

"But once you taste winning, it's more than a drug. We were on such a high of emotion last year, it's the best feeling. You just want to keep going towards it. That's what drives me. Also, my Cup day, I had so much things going on. I want to win again, put it in my living room and do (expletive) all all day."

On May 28, Marchessault went public with frustration over the lack of negotiations.

"I did not have a call yet or anything," Marchessault told the Las Vegas Review-Journal. "They said they were interested to definitely re-sign me, and we'll see."

It wouldn't be like the flashy Golden Knights to let such a productive and beloved player walk out the door and not have something else up their sleeve. Definitely a team to watch as the market opens.

3. Brandon Montour

Age on July 1: 30

Position: Defence

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$3.5 million

The latest: Much like teammate Reinhart, Montour had spent years elsewhere before finally finding his best fit with Florida, the new Stanley Cup champs.

And like Reinhart, Montour came into the season with zero protection or contract security. All signs were pointing to a willingness to extend a working relationship, but as the market opens a wide range of teams will have their eye on the offence-fuelling blueliner who enjoyed a career year in 2022-23 (16 goals, 73 points) that sprung almost out of nowhere.

Prudently, GM Zito was not in a rush to buy Montour stock on July 1, when it was at its highest. Instead, Florida's front office chose patience, waiting to see how Montour's shoulder responded from summertime surgery.

Late to get running, the right-shooting Montour didn't light up the league again, but he's been solid (eight goals and 25 assists in 66 games).

Montour was a warrior in the '23 and '24 post-seasons. And puck-moving, right-shot defencemen in their prime aren't exactly in abundance.

Zito took care of another pending UFA D-man, Gustav Forsling, first, signing him to an eight-year extension at a \$5.75-million cap hit. Montour will ask for more.

"One day at a time. My goal is to try to keep the core together," Zito said of Montour's future on March 8. "At the same time, be respectful that you know people have to make individual decisions."

But the sharks are circling should Montour hit the open market. The Utah Hockey Club, for one, has already started re-shaping its blue line with draft weekend trades for Sergachev and John Marino. Michael Kesselring and Sean Durzi have since also re-signed. That's four blueliners. They still have over \$20 million in cap space.

Lots of money for aggressive new owner Ryan Smith to splash the table with.

"Utah I still think there are some people who believe they're going to be in on Brandon Montour if he hits the market," Friedman said.

Of course, they won't be the only ones after the puck-moving blueliner, and you can't count out the Stanley Cup champs keeping him, even if he does make it to the open market.

4. Elias Lindholm

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Centre

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$4.85 million

The latest: Lindholm indisputably became the most dependable centre headed toward the open market once Auston Matthews, Sebastian Aho, and Mark Scheifele re-signed last summer, a fact that simultaneously increased the player's bargaining leverage and trade value.

Lindholm and the Flames took an earnest run at a contract extension, but when the player's ask exceeded Calgary GM Craig Conroy's budget, it quickly became clear that he'd be traded away.

Conroy secured a decent package by renting Lindholm to the Canucks — a first-round pick, a conditional fourth-rounder, winger Andrei Kuzmenko, plus a couple defence prospects — but the two-way centre's fit in Vancouver was initially underwhelming.

That Vancouver locked up Elias Pettersson long-term, gave the bag to Filip Hronek, and also re-signed Dakota Joshua, Teddy Blueger and Tyler Myers suggests there is not enough budget to turn Lindholm into more than a pure rental.

At the trade deadline, there were even murmurs that Lindholm was being considered in a three-way flip trade to the Boston Bruins that would then send Guentzel to the Canucks instead.

The centre's stock had been on decline, but a stellar post-season did wonders for his market value.

As much as the Canucks enjoyed his critical contributions this May, accommodating Lindholm's raise will be difficult.

Cities that make sense as potential landing spots: Boston, Carolina (again), Chicago, Utah, and San Jose.



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5. Matt Duchene

Age on July 1: 33

Position: Centre / Right wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$3 million

The latest: A surprise free agent in 2023 after getting bought out by new Nashville GM Barry Trotz, Duchene signed with the Dallas Stars because they "checked off every box."

Enjoying better matchups as a second-line centre and being surrounded by a more complete collection of talent, Duchene thrived in Big D.

The 1,056-game veteran rebounded with a 65-point campaign and helped push the Stars to the Western Conference Final.

With Chris Tanev traded to Toronto, there's one less pending UFA for GM Jim Nill to find room for under the cap. He still must accommodate a raise for RFA Thomas Harley, but there is growing belief that Duchene and the Stars are on the way to extending their relationship.

Things can still change in any negotiation, of course, but don't be surprised if we strike Duchene's name off this list sometime on Sunday and replace it with another.

6. Brett Pesce

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Defence

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$4.025 million

The latest: Trade rumours and Pesce had always gone together like fish and grits.

And now it appears the D-man will simply walk out the door for nothing.

Rumblings that teams were calling on the player and/or the Hurricanes were considering moving him has become an annual tradition in Carolina — largely because a right-shot, penalty-killing, shutdown defenceman with a stable track record is such a rare commodity.

Considering the deals given in 2023 to UFAs Vladislav Gavrikov and Damon Severson, Pesce should be looking at a long-term contract with a \$6-million (plus?) AAV.

The player is on record saying he'd welcome an extension with the club that drafted him back in 2013. But with Martin Necas, Brady Skjei, Tony DeAngelo, and Teuvo Teravainen all on expiring deals, Tulsy has plenty of difficult decisions to make for his cash-conscious organization.

Pesce appears to be pricing himself out.

The Predators, Maple Leafs and Devils were among the teams with reported interest, but while Nashville now might be gearing up to chase Stamkos, and the Maple Leafs acquired Tanev in a trade, the Devils were the only one of the three who moved out a defenceman Saturday, trading John Marino and his three-year, \$4.4 million cap hit to Utah.

Might that be to clear one right handed shot defenceman for another?

"Marino being traded confirms what a lot of people have expected for a while that Brett Pesce is heading to New Jersey," Friedman reported Sunday.

7. Teuvo Teravainen

Age on July 1: 29

Position: Left wing / Right wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$5.4 million

The latest: The four-time 20-goal scorer routinely produces strong offensive numbers while playing dependable defence and staying out of the penalty box.

In late summer, former GM Waddell told Chip Alexander of the Raleigh News & Observer that all extension talks with Teravainen, Pesce and Skjei had been silenced.

There is certainly a wait-and-see vibe coming out of Carolina, an organization known for its financial prudence.

Teravainen framed this season as "a big year" for himself and the team and noted that "not too much" extension talks were had in-season.

Would he prefer to re-sign?

"Of course," he said, upon elimination. "I've had such a good time here with all these people, and the team's been awesome. Everything is good here, so hopefully I can stay. You never know. It's kind of a new situation for me right now."

Teravainen's skills would complement many a top six. If the Hurricanes don't pay up, another team will.

Sources say, he's open to a fresh situation.

8. Tyler Toffoli

Age on July 1: 32

Position: Right wing / Left wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$4.25 million

The latest: When New Jersey's Tom Fitzgerald acquired Toffoli from the Flames in the off-season, the Devils GM hoped the scoring winger would grow into more than a one-year rental.

(In fact, Fitzgerald nearly signed Toffoli in the 2020 off-season, before the Montreal Canadiens locked him up for four years and \$17 million.)

So, yes, the prolific scorer and the team supposedly on the rise had mutual interest on an extension.

And then New Jersey's losses began to outweigh its wins, prompting a deadline deal to all-in Winnipeg.

"We're looking forward to it," Toffoli said of he and his wife, Cat Belanger. "We're going to another Canadian city. There's nothing better than playing in a Canadian market. It's a weird feeling, but at the same time we're excited. Winnipeg, the fans are very passionate. I'm excited to go there and keep pushing for the playoffs and try and make a run there."

GM Kevin Cheveldayoff also went deep with rentals Sean Monahan and Colin Miller, plus held tight on three "own rentals," yet his Jets were swift first-round fodder for Colorado.

The Toffoli file is one of many Winnipeg must sort through this summer as the front office adjusts from another playoff flop.

"There are going to be changes," Cheveldayoff said. "Changes are inevitable every off-season. We need to come back 10 per cent better. Everybody. Somehow."

9. Chandler Stephenson

Age on July 1: 30

Position: Centre

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$2.75 million

The latest: Superb in the spring of 2023, Stephenson piled up 20 points in middle-six minutes during the Golden Knights' 22-game Cup run and played an integral role en route to his second championship ring.

The centreman's production scuffled in 2023-24, however. Stephenson was a minus player (dash-9) for the first time in five seasons, and his 51 points marked a three-year low.

That said, the NHL's demand for both centres and proven post-season performers remains sky-high. The Red Wings splashed \$25.5 million at centre J.T. Compher in 2023's free agency, and his previous best was 52 points.

Bottom line: There will be a robust market for the two-way Stephenson if he remains unsigned by July 1.

10. Brady Skjei

Age on July 1: 30

Position: Defence

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$5.25 million



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The latest: Despite the top-four defenceman's insistence that he'd love to remain in Carolina, Skjei's career season should price him out.

The versatile, all-situations lefty is comfortable playing the right side and is coming off career highs in both regular-season points (47) and playoff points (nine).

"There hasn't been a ton (of negotiating)," Skjei told reporters once the Hurricanes were eliminated. "It'll probably pick up now before July 1. Obviously, this is an unbelievable place. Great people here, coaching staff, players, medical, everything. It's an unbelievable place to be. We'll see what happens."

Skjei says he is looking for a "fair" offer.

"That's the biggest thing," he said. "We'll see what that looks like."

Looks like it could start with a six on a long-term deal.

11. Jeff Skinner

Age on July 1: 32

Position: LW

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$9 million

The latest: Skinner may not have equalled the 40-goal output he posted in his first year with the Sabres at any other point during his \$72 million contract, but he's still a goal scorer, with two 30-plus goal campaigns and 92 goals total over the past three years (43rd in the NHL).

Choosing instead to save over \$7 million on their salary cap this summer to be active elsewhere, the Sabres bought out the three years remaining on his eight-year contract. Skinner's value was blinded by his \$9 million cap hit, but his ability to put pucks in net will create a market in free agency. Playoff teams will be after his services at a reduced rate so maybe, finally, he can get into a post-season game in his 15th NHL season.

12. Jake DeBrusk

Age on July 1: 27

Position: LW

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$4 million

The latest: The 14th overall pick in the 2015 draft, DeBrusk has twice scored a career-best 27 goals in a season and though he sagged to 19 in 2023-24, he led the Bruins with five goals in the playoffs. After making a trade request out of Boston two years ago, DeBrusk is now set to test the waters as a free agent and should generate a healthy market as a secondary scorer with some muscle to his game who has proven he can step up his game at the most important time of year. DeBrusk had more high danger chances than any other Bruin this past season

More notable UFAs in 2024: Tyler Bertuzzi, Cam Talbot, Ilya Samsonov, T.J. Brodie, Adam Henrique, Sean Walker, Nikita Zadorov, Viktor Arvidsson, Blake Wheeler, Vladimir Tarasenko, Daniel Sprong, Alexander Barabanov, David Perron, Tyson Barrie, Jakub Vrana, Sean Monahan, Max Pacioretty, Tony DeAngelo, Tomas Tatar, Tyler Johnson, Jack Roslovic, Shayne Gostisbehere, Victor Olofsson, Jason Zucker, Matt Dumba, John Klingberg, Chris Tanev, Pheonix Copley, Anthony Duclair, Pat Maroon, Anthony Mantha, James Reimer, Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Jonathan Drouin, Corey Perry, Alexander Wennberg, Jordan Martinook, Matt Roy, Jani Hakanpaa, Laurent Brossoit, Anthony Stolarz, Joe Pavelski, Ryan Suter, Cam Atkinson.

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL's Top 12 RFAs of 2024: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox

Top-pair defencemen and No. 1 goalies. Bridge candidates and budding superstars who need to be locked up ASAP.

The 2024 class of restricted free agents offers a little of everything.

And while several potential RFAs avoided the drama and uncertainty by signing well before July 1 (Vancouver's Elias Pettersson and Filip Hronek chief among them), plenty of intriguing young names remain unsigned for 2024-25.

As these RFAs look to bank off their platform campaigns and managers wonder how to spend their newfound cap space, plenty of tense negotiations (or trades?) are on deck.

The situations in Carolina and Detroit are particularly compelling.

Might this summer create the conditions for the rare offer sheet to really make things interesting?

"It's part of the CBA, I'm certainly open to it," said Sabres GM Kevyn Adams, who shaved an additional \$7.55 million off his team's cap by buying out Jeff Skinner, leaving Buffalo with \$31.7 million in cap room and all the draft picks they'd need to give back in compensation. "Never in my mind is it something you should rule out. I think they're tricky because typically they're going to get matched so what are you really accomplishing? But if we thought it was a move we could do that would make our team better, we'll do it."

Here's where things stand with the top 12 RFAs of 2024.

1. Jeremy Swayman (Boston)

Age on July 1: 25

Position: Goaltender

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$3.475 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: World juniors bronze medallist (2018). William Jennings Trophy co-winner (2023). Career save percentage of .919. Three consecutive 20-win seasons. 2024 All-Star Game representative. Big hugger. Playoff stud.

The latest: Despite sharing the Boston Bruins' crease with pal Linus Ullmark, Swayman played an integral role in the club's run to the 2023 Presidents' Trophy and took over as the club's go-to goalie in the 2024 post-season.

Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported in early March that Swayman and GM Don Sweeney had begun negotiating his next contract, which should be a biggie now that the goaltender has sparked during his one-year prove-it pact.

Swayman politely declined comment on the report but did not deny that talks were underway.

The goalie, remember, went through arbitration last summer, where he said he was subjected to "hearing things that a player should never hear" before getting a one-year award.

The inevitable raise for Swayman prompted Boston's trade of hug buddy Ullmark (locked into a \$5 million cap hit) to Ottawa.

The price to keep Swayman happy only jumped with his .933 save percentage in the post-season.

He's the real deal.

What will the new number be? Ilya Sorokin's \$8.25 million AAV on his eight-year extension could be a high mark, while the pending extension for Rangers stud Igor Shesterkin may set a new bar for all goalies. But, interestingly, Juuse Saros' reported incoming eight-year extension with Nashville has a \$7.7 million AAV attached to it. Swayman will likely be somewhere in that ballpark, given his .916 save percentage over the past three years is comparable to each of those stoppers.

The Bruins did the minimum and gave him a qualifying offer before the deadline and would rather not go to arbitration again. But each passing day gets one step closer to that uncomfortable situation once again.

2. Moritz Seider (Detroit)

Age on July 1: 23

Position: Defence



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2023-24 salary cap hit: \$863,333

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Top-six draft pick. Calder Trophy winner (2022). Silver medalist at 2023 world championship. Named to 2021 and 2023 world championship all-star teams. Six-foot-three, 205-pound right-shot horse with edge. Can run a power play and kill a penalty. Led all Red Wings in ice time (22:22). Capable of 50 points while taking on hard matchups. Only NHLer with 200 blocks and 200 hits this season.

The latest: Seldom do rebuilding clubs mess around trying to nickel-and-dime their young stud defencemen.

Consider how swiftly Ottawa locked up Jake Sanderson with an eight-year, \$64.4-million extension. Or how Buffalo gave Rasmus Dahlin and Owen Power monster offers they couldn't refuse to secure their prime seasons.

Red Wings GM Steve Yzerman should be willing to ink Seider the maximum term of an eight-year extension and make the German his highest-paid defenceman by a mile.

"He battles hard every game," Yzerman said after the season ended. "He blocks shots, gets hit, makes plays. We're asking him to do a lot. He's got the mental toughness to weather it all.

"As our team gets better around him, Mo's role might change a little bit. He'll be used a little bit differently, which I think will allow him to display the offensive side of his game."

How does an AAV around \$8.6 million sound?

That would tuck Seider in just below team captain and payroll leader Dylan Larkin (\$8.7 million cap hit).

"It's not a big secret I want to be a Red Wing," Seider said.

"I'm also confident enough that I could be a good asset for this organization, and that really matters to me. I think then you can talk about numbers, lengths and how long the contract should be, but those two first parts fit well — and they do — then I'm pretty confident we've got something done."

3. Lucas Raymond (Detroit)

Age on July 1: 22

Position: Right wing / Left wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Fourth-overall pick. World junior star twice over for Sweden. Two-time 20-goal, 57-point forward. His age fits well with Red Wings' trajectory for improvement. Led Detroit in scoring in 2023-24 (72 points) and played all 82 games.

The latest: While Yzerman keeps his plans under lock and key, the Detroit GM's previous actions may tell us where things may go with Raymond.

When Yzerman signed stud RFA Alex DeBrincat to a four-year contract averaging \$7.875 million per season, he suggested a preference for mid-term commitments instead of longer deal — like, say, the seven-year, \$49-million whopper Anaheim gave to RFA Troy Terry last summer.

"You're starting to see more players, at least this off-season, and I think it might be a trend, signing shorter-term contracts, not necessarily going the full seven, eight years," Yzerman said.

"I'm not sure I have a hard-set philosophy on contracts. There's risk in every deal. There's short-term risk you lose control of the player. On the back end, the long-term risk is a lot of things can happen that affect a player's ability to perform on a long-term deal.

"What is my philosophy? I try to make a deal with the player, try to understand what they're looking for and what's important to them, but ultimately, I'm comfortable. I like these mid-term deals."

Something to keep in mind when talks heat up.

"What I do know is that I love this team," Raymond said. "I love the city, and I want to be here."

At his pre-draft availability, Yzerman raised eyebrows when discussing the unsigned Seider and Raymond.

"Ultimately, I can't force anything. They'll get done in due time," the GM said. "I prefer to have them done. But to be quite honest, I don't anticipate that happening at this stage. And we'll just work around it and make decisions along the way fully aware ... that we will try to get them under contract or plan to get them under contract."

Alex DeBrincat is still under contract for three years at a sizeable cap hit (\$7.875 million) and at his post-draft availability, Yzerman said his first priority was to re-sign UFA-to-be Patrick Kane. Yzerman succeeded on that front, reportedly agreeing to a one-year deal with Kane hours before free agency opens. Add the money earmarked for Raymond into that and quickly Detroit could have quite a bit of money tied up on the flank.

"We're hoping to do something long-term with Lucas, if we can't we'll do something short-term with him, but our first priority is long-term so we're going to have a lot of money tied up in two wingers."

4. Seth Jarvis (Carolina)

Age on July 1: 22

Position: Right wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$894,167

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: First-round pick. Always produces in post-season. Ripped career highs in goals (33), points (67) and plus/minus (plus-23). Hurricanes need his offence. Carolina has gobs of cap space opening for 2024-25.

The latest: The benefits of buying out Patrick Marleau's Maple Leafs contract are now paying off big-time for the Hurricanes. Jarvis — drafted with the pick Carolina obtained from Toronto to take an aging Marleau's bad money — is emerging as an impact winger who delivers on the power play and in clutch situations.

While rookie GM Eric Tulskey's decisions on key UFAs Teuvo Teravainen, Jordan Martinook, Brady Skjei, Brett Pesce and Tony DeAngelo will be more complicated and costly, keeping Jarvis in the fold is a no-brainer.

Because Jarvis is just now emerging from his entry-level deal, the team holds the hammer.

Does Tulskey wish to go bridge?

Or will the Canes bet big that Jarvis could break out and lock him up long-term the way they did with Andrei Svechnikov as he wrapped his ELC?

Cory Lavalette of the North State Journal reported that based on deals regarding similar players, Jarvis's camp could ask for an eight-year extension with an \$8.35 million AAV.

Tulskey has said publicly that he is "not worried about offer sheets" because the Canes have the cap space to match: "It's not really a route I expect anyone to take."

5. Thomas Harley (Dallas)

Age on July 1: 22

Position: Defence

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$863,333

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: First-round pick. Youngest roster player in the 2020 Cup Final. World junior silver medalist for Team Canada (2021). Superb showing for Stars during their 2023 run to the Western Conference Final. Breakout 47-point campaign with career highs in all categories. Only Miro Heiskanen logs more minutes for Dallas.

The latest: The emergence of slowly groomed Harley was an incredible subplot for the Dallas Stars this season, as they raced towards another legitimate stab at a championship.

GM Jim Nill, you'll recall, bridged his last breakout RFA, Jason Robertson, so he may well do the same with Harley — who only has one



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full NHL campaign on his resume and lacks the arbitration leverage of Ty Dellandrea (traded to the Sharks) and Sam Steel (not qualified).

Whether it's this summer or one down the line, however, Harley is building a sturdy case for a significant windfall.

Nill already has veteran lefties Heiskanen and Esa Lindell under contract for 2024-25, but Harley's youth and impressive offensive acumen will be needed.

Nill, you may recall, bet big on a young John Klingberg coming out of his entry-level deal in 2015, securing that D-man's best seasons at a bargain rate.

The Stars bought out another left-shot defender, veteran Ryan Suter, creating \$2.86 million in additional cap space. Dallas, who has seen so many of its youngsters become quick contributors on the pro roster, will look for more youth additions on the blue line. Harley is quickly becoming a leader here.

6. Quinton Byfield (Los Angeles)

Age on July 1: 21

Position: Centre / Left wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$894,167

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: World junior gold medallist (2020). World junior silver medallist (2021). Second-overall pick. Enjoyed breakout season hitting 20 goals and 55 points. Scored best highlight goal of 2024. Earned more trust from coaches as season progressed and a promotion to top power-play unit. Teams generally like six-foot-five, 220-pound centremen with skill.

The latest: Byfield is a prime example of patience paying off.

The second-overall choice of the 2020 draft failed to make the instant splash that the player selected immediately after did (Tim Stützle), but the Los Angeles Kings let their impact forward develop in the AHL and are now reaping the benefits.

"He's really stepped up there, just his overall game. The pace that he plays with, it definitely helps our team," Kings GM Rob Blake said in March.

The general manager must decide here: Attempt to lock up Byfield long-term (\$6.5 million or \$7 million AAV?) and bet the player outperforms his cap hit? Or bridge a player (\$3.5 million AAV?) that only has one good NHL campaign under his belt?

By virtue of his performance, Byfield has pushed his file to the top of the priority list in L.A., and the trade of Pierre-Luc Dubois has cleared up cap space and opportunity down the middle.

7. Martin Necas (Carolina)

Age on July 1: 25

Position: Right wing / Centre

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$3 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: First-round draft pick. Calder Cup champion. Star forward for Czechia at three world juniors and a world championship. Two-time 20-goal man on a team that needs offence. Capable of 70 points.

The latest: The difference between RFA top-six forwards Necas and Jarvis is that the former has arbitration rights and has already made good on his prove-it bridge contract.

OK, it's time to get paid, Necas must be thinking.

The dynamic playmaker is one of 11 Hurricanes on an expiring contract. His asking price is on the rise, and he has arbitration power in his favour, which is why the Canes were exploring the trade market here.

"I do think there were very serious conversations between Columbus and Carolina about the No. 4 pick," Elliott Friedman noted on his post-draft episode of 32 Thoughts: The Podcast. "I do think that the (Blue Jackets)

made Necas a contract offer with permission of the Hurricanes, obviously it didn't get done. Columbus was happy to keep the pick and get Cayden Lindstrom."

But things change quickly in this compact lead-up to free agency, and it's possible Carolina's calculation has changed now.

After the Canes were unable to get Guentzel signed to an extension, they traded him on Sunday to Tampa Bay for a 2025 third-round pick. Might that improve the odds they look to keep Necas rather than lose another offensive producer? This team can't afford to lose more creators.

8. Matty Beniers (Seattle)

Age on July 1: 21

Position: Centre

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$897,500

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: World junior gold medallist and world championship bronze medallist in 2021 as the youngest player on both teams. Olympian (2022). Second-overall draft pick and first-ever selection by the Seattle Kraken. Calder Trophy winner (2023). Scored 24 goals and 57 points as a rookie.

The latest: If Beniers could swap last season's stat line and this season's, he probably would.

A victim of the sophomore slump, Beniers' down year production-wise (15 goals and 37 points) aligned with the Kraken's tumble out of the playoff picture and resulted in an underwhelming platform campaign.

His bargaining position is compromised, which has us wondering if a short-term deal is the solution here.

GM Ron Francis revealed at his trade-deadline press conference that he held preliminary extension discussions with Beniers' camp over the summer. Those were tabled until the off-season.

"I have no concerns about Matty's game long-term. He'll be a big part of this organization for a lot of years moving forward," Francis assured upon season's end.

For the Kraken to excel, the club needs Beniers to live up to his promise.

"He's definitely felt the pressure since he's came into the organization, since Day 1. We were a struggling team, and he was kind of looked at as the saviour of our team. And I'm sure he's been hearing that a lot and knowing that is going to have a prominent role ever since he's been drafted," teammate Vince Dunn said.

"When you see a guy maybe going through a little slump or going through hardships, I just try to get 'em going. Make him realize how important they are to the team and how much potential they do have, and hopefully they can bring that out in themselves."

Beniers was on hand at the draft in Las Vegas and announced Seattle's first-round pick, Berkly Catton a winger with immense offensive upside who could share a line with the 21-year-old centre one day.

9. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (Buffalo)

Age on July 1: 25

Position: Goaltender

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$837,500

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: World junior gold medallist (2019). Red Tilson Trophy (OHL) winner (2019). Set career highs this season in games played, wins, and save percentage. Winning record for a struggling squad. GMs love big goalies, and UPL stands six-foot-five, 217 pounds. The Sabres have plenty of cap space.

The latest: Luukkonen enjoyed a breakout season in a year that was originally billed in Buffalo as prospect Devon Levi's coming-out party.

Sabres GM Kevyn Adams has been doling out long-term extensions to RFAs lately (Tage Thompson, Rasmus Dahlin, Owen Power, Dylan Cozens), banking on improvement and building a young core.



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As well as Luukkonen performed this season, we don't see a similar deal in the cards here. His sample size of excellence is as small as it is encouraging.

The organization has high hopes for Levi, so a mid-term deal makes more sense for UPL and would ease the pressure on Levi to elevate as an NHL No. 1 before he's had a strong development run.

Adams began extension talks with Luukkonen's agent, Markus Lehto, in March.

"We're making good progress," Adams told NHL insider Frank Seravalli.

"It's something I'm excited about because I know he wants to be here, and he loves this team, he loves the organization, and he loves his teammates. That's a good place to start."

10. Anton Lundell (Florida)

Age on July 1: 22

Position: Centre / Left wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Stanley Cup champion (2024). Defensively responsible student of the Barkov Way. Twelfth-overall draft pick. World junior gold medalist (2019). World championships silver medalist (2021). Already put up 112 points in first 216 games despite playing a middle-six role. Plenty of playoff experience (54 games) for a youngster.

The latest: If the Florida Panthers are forced to lose a core member or two of their championship team to unrestricted free agency, one reason for that will be because they had to give Lundell a wage in line with his performance.

The middle-six Finnish centreman has been affectionately dubbed "Baby Barkov" in South Florida because he can blend offensive punch with defensive prowess.

"I don't know what the ceiling is for this young man," coach Paul Maurice said.

GM Bill Zito is high on Lundell and not afraid to lock up pieces he sees as integral to the club's nucleus long-term (see: Forsling, Gustav).

It'll be fascinating to see if Lundell takes the security of term or bets on an offensive uptick and pushes for a bridge deal instead.

It will also be fascinating to see if another team sees Lundell as a pressure point for Florida and an offer sheet candidate. With all his experience and production at a young age, the fact he plays centre, and the plenty of expiring contracts the Panthers have to re-sign or replace, might Lundell be a target for the rare offer sheet? Something in the \$6.871 million to \$9.161 million range, for example, would cost a team a first- second- and third-round pick in compensation and put pressure on Zito.

11. Cole Perfetti (Winnipeg)

Age on July 1: 22

Position: Left wing / Centre

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Top-10 draft pick. World junior silver medalist and world championship gold medalist (2021). High hockey IQ. Creative playmaker. Posted career highs in goals (19) and points (38) in 2023-24.

The latest: Perfetti heads to the negotiating table after a healthy but uneven campaign that saw him thrive for stretches in the Winnipeg Jets' top six but also endure a 23-game goal drought and 11 healthy scratches.

A superstar in junior, the forward admitted to struggling mentally with his inconsistent usage and performance. And as the Jets sped toward the post-season, GM Kevin Cheveldayoff went out and rented a couple more top-six forwards, Tyler Toffoli and Sean Monahan, to eat up meaningful minutes.

Rick Bowness coached to win and trusted his veterans more.

Perfetti's situation appears like a classic bridge-deal case: The team needs to see more, and the player doesn't want to negotiate long-term based on a stat line that should only escalate over the next two or three seasons.

12. Kirill Marchenko (Columbus)

Age on July 1: 23

Position: Right wing

2023-24 salary cap hit: \$1.562 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: WJC bronze medalist (2019) and silver medalist (2020). Led all Blue Jackets in goals (23) in 2023-24. Most shots among Columbus forwards (193) in 2023-24. Creative, fun player, full of swagger.

The latest: Don Waddell has begun to make his mark on the Blue Jackets, buying out 23-year-old defenceman Adam Boqvist and leaving RFA Jake Bean and Alex Nylander unqualified, thus making them UFAs on July 1. There was no surprise that the new GM did qualify Marchenko, who will turn 24 later this month and showed promise of being a top-line player this past season. Marchenko earned a nice place on Columbus' power play, finishing fourth among forwards in average PP time per game, and finished second in scoring to Johnny Gaudreau with the man advantage. Marchenko is turning into a nice get for the Blue Jackets, who took him in the second round back in 2018, though he didn't arrive in North America until 2022-23. He led Columbus in goal scoring this past season, even though his goals per game average dipped from his rookie season.

More notable pending RFAs: Eeli Tolvanen, Jack Drury, Cole Sillinger, Simon Holmstrom, Ryan Lindgren, Barrett Hayton, Dawson Mercer, Bobby Brink, Connor McMichael, Carl Grundstrom, Henri Jokiharju, Dustin Wolf, Nick Robertson, Shane Pinto, J.J. Moser

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Sportsnet.ca / Six potential destinations for Steven Stamkos to consider this off-season

David Morassutti

For the second straight year, the Tampa Bay Lightning saw their season end in the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs and the front office has already been busy trying to reshape the roster.

The Lightning cleared over \$11 million in cap space by trading Mikhail Sergachev and Tanner Jeannot at the draft, then promptly spent a large chunk of those savings on scoring winger Jake Guentzel after a trade with the Hurricanes.

But what does all of that mean for Steven Stamkos?

It's hard not to look at how the Lightning and Stamkos found themselves in this position. The 34-year-old made it clear back before the season began that he wasn't thrilled about not being in the team's long-term plans.

"To be honest, I'm disappointed in the lack of talk in that regard," Stamkos said as Lightning players reported for the start of training camp. "It was something that I expressed at the end of last year that I wanted to get something done before training camp started."

With free agency quickly approaching it's now up to Stamkos to decide what comes next for him as he enters free agency for the first time. The 16-year veteran will have some options to consider, especially after another productive season where he scored 40 goals and 81 points in 79 games and led the Lightning with five goals in their first-round series against the Florida Panthers.



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Here is a look at the top destinations and fits for Stamkos in free agency.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Projected cap space: \$16.5 million

Players signed for next season: 16

The Lightning have been in this position before with Stamkos but unlike the last time he was a free agent in 2016 the team's priorities have certainly changed.

General manager Julien BriseBois said he met with Stamkos' agent Don Meehan to see if there was a chance to work out a deal but this time around, the captain is willing to see what's on the market.

"We're both going to go ahead and follow through with our due diligence, seeing what's out there and seeing what's best," BriseBois said following the conclusion of the draft on Saturday. "My responsibility is to see what's best for the Lightning organization, and Steven has to do what's best for him, his career and his family. So, unless something changes between now and July 1 — and it doesn't look like it will — we will get to July 1."

Tampa Bay has been busy the past couple of off-seasons ensuring the team's core is locked up long-term, including long-term deals for goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy and defencemen Erik Cernak along with forwards Nikita Kucherov, Brayden Point, Brandon Hagel and Anthony Cirelli. The real question is where does Stamkos fit into the Lightning's long-term plan, and can they make room for him on the salary cap?

Tampa Bay made the tough decision to trade away Sergachev and Jeannot in order to open up some cap space but it appears that Stamkos' contract was not really part of the plan.

What changed things was how realistic the Lightning's chances were to get Guentzel before he could hit the open market.

"Sources indicate that the Tampa Bay Lightning and Jake Guentzel have agreed to terms on a seven-year contract. Not pen to paper yet, certainly not a contract that has been registered with the NHL and the Lightning have been keeping some of the details really close to the vest," DailyFaceoff's Frank Seravalli said on Sportsnet Central Sunday night. "What is the AAV? I believe it's going to be in the \$9 million range give or take a little bit when it comes to the final details. But I think part of the reason why they haven't revealed or have been so cautious about revealing some of those details is because they're still grinding on Steven Stamkos. I think there's still some hope on their part, I think there's still some hope on the part of Steven Stamkos and his camp that they can find a way to work something out."

The Lightning have 16 players under contract next season and just over \$16.5 million but that doesn't factor in Guentzel's deal (around \$9 million AAV) which could mean they would only have about \$7.5 million in space to fill out the rest of the roster and get a Stamkos deal done. They might have to make some moves in order to get more flexibility but again that's assuming they can get Stamkos to take a pay cut.

Another factor the Lightning need to consider is Victor Hedman's pending UFA status in 2025 and it looks like a deal could be announced as soon as July 1.

As crucial as Stamkos has been to the Lightning's success, Hedman's importance to the team can't be overlooked and for Tampa's sake, it would be tough to not only lose one but both in back-to-back off-seasons.

Vegas Golden Knights

Projected cap space: \$6,845,016 with LTIR moves

Players signed for next season: 19

It's becoming an annual tradition that the Golden Knights pursue the biggest fish in the free-agent pond and this year is no different.

Frank Seravalli from Daily Faceoff reports that the Golden Knights will make a pitch to Stamkos in free agency after not coming to terms with their own leading scorer Jonathan Marchessault.

The Golden Knights had the 20th-ranked power play in 2023-24 and Stamkos might be the most consistent goal scorer available to be had.

Vegas is very tight to the cap but that hasn't stopped them from adding superstars in the past (Alex Pietrangolo, Mark Stone and Jack Eichel to

name just a few). If they believe they can get Stamkos they have shown time and time again that they will do what is necessary to find the space under the cap.

Detroit Red Wings

Projected cap space: \$28.7 million

Players signed for next season: 13

If there is a person who might be capable of luring Stamkos away from Tampa Bay, it's the man who was the architect for many of Tampa Bay's best seasons.

Steve Yzerman was also the general manager when Stamkos decided to stay with the Lightning in 2016. Yzerman knows what Stamkos brings to the table and the Red Wings could certainly use a scorer in a big way.

Yzerman made a big push to get Alex DeBrincat last off-season in order to bolster Detroit's offence, but he wasn't able to get back to being the 41-goal scorer that he was during his time in Chicago.

When the Red Wings were without captain Dylan Larkin because of an injury, the rest of the team struggled in his absence, which not only suggests a need to address the team's offensive depth but also a glaring need to add some leadership.

What could make a push for Stamkos complicated is the Red Wings need to make improvements to the blue line and between the pipes. Yzerman has already shed \$3.4 million after trading Jake Walman to the San Jose Sharks.

They also made the decision to bring back Patrick Kane to a one-year deal at \$4 million but that could be worth \$6.5 million if Kane meets the performance bonuses in his contract. However, the \$1.5 million in bonuses could be moved to next year's cap.

The Red Wings could also look to move off a defender like Justin Holl in order to gain some roster flexibility, but his \$3.4 million cap hit might be tough to move out, especially after sending a second-round pick in the Walman trade. Even Ville Husso's \$4.75 million cap hit looks like a boat anchor deal that could be addressed with a trade.

While the team has an abundance of cap space, Yzerman and company have some heavy lifting to do with contract extensions needed for two key players in Moritz Seider and Lucas Raymond. If they can try to move some players out to add some flexibility, Detroit should consider themselves a prime destination for Stamkos.

Montreal Canadiens

Projected cap space: \$20.68 million with LTIR moves

Players signed for next season: 18

If there is a chance that Stamkos hits the open market, Kent Hughes and company should be one of the first teams to call Stamkos' agent for a meeting with the perennial goalscorer.

There are several areas Stamkos would help improve this Canadiens team including their below-average power play, which was the 26th-ranked unit in the league at 17.5 per cent. Montreal is also in need of more goal scoring with Nick Suzuki leading the team with 33 goals this season and only three players putting up 20 or more goals.

Of course, the Canadiens also have a major asset within the organization who could help the team persuade Stamkos to consider Montreal in head coach Martin St. Louis. It's no secret that St. Louis is someone Stamkos has a lot of respect for from their time together in Tampa Bay.

The Canadiens could have roughly \$20.68 million in cap space once they place Carey Price on long-term injured reserve which should be enough for the team to consider taking a swing at Stamkos and make other moves. Some will wonder if it would be the right move for a team like the Canadiens to make a play for a high-priced free agent while they are in a rebuild, but at some point Montreal will have to make a push to return to the playoffs.

Nashville Predators

Projected cap space: \$26.35 million

Players signed for next season: 15



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Just when it looked like the Predators were going to take a step back with general manager Barry Trotz in charge, they were a surprise team that went on a big second-half run to secure a wild-card spot. There are still glaring problems on this roster and that was made clear with some of the players they added at the trade deadline in Jason Zucker and Anthony Beauvillier.

While some might be concerned about Stamkos' age and injury history when it comes to making a sizeable commitment to him in free agency, the Predators are in a position where they need to add a premium goalscorer.

Filip Forsberg had a career year where he put up 48 goals and 94 points but the next-highest goal-scorer on the team was Ryan O'Reilly with 26. This is a team that has been trying to turn a new leaf offensively after buying out Matt Duchene and Ryan Johansen last off-season and it's going to be tough for them to rely on Gustav Nyquist to replicate his production after scoring 23 goals and a whopping 75 points when he had never had more than 60 points in a single season before.

In the playoffs, the Predators were relying on goal-scoring by committee with Forsberg leading the way at two goals, so having a player like Stamkos who had five through five games would be a welcomed addition.

Looking at their cap structure for next season, the Predators don't have any big-name free agents to worry about. They are closing in on an extension for Juuse Saros but that deal doesn't kick in until the 2024-25 season.

There is no doubt Stamkos could help this Predators team not just with his ability to put the puck in the net but also add another leader to the fold.

A darkhorse destination... Toronto Maple Leafs

Projected cap space: \$12.080 million

Players signed for next season: 18

The Toronto Maple Leafs made a push to go after Stamkos before, maybe they can get it done the second time around?

Obviously, the Leafs have several needs to consider this off-season after losing out in the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs yet again. They will have a decision to make on how they proceed with their goaltending position and the blue line is in need of a hefty revamp.

Of course, the pending decisions on what the team does with John Tavares and Mitch Marner, who both have one year left on their deals, will also play a big part in how they navigate free agency. Bringing back Max Domi on a four-year, \$3.75 million deal makes it tough to see Tyler Bertuzzi return as well.

In Toronto's case there is only so much cap space that can be dedicated to free agents, especially with the amount of money they already have tied up with their core.

The Leafs are also going to consider a big push towards a couple of defencemen in free agency and have been grinding away on a deal with Chris Tanev after acquiring his rights.

At the same time, this season exposed a glaring issue with the Leafs' inability to put pucks in the net, especially on the power play in the playoffs which was one of the reasons they couldn't get past the Boston Bruins. If the Leafs were to consider going in a different direction, Stamkos' resume would be tough to ignore.

Even if Toronto were to find a way to move out some money, some would question if going after Stamkos is the right choice given the money would be better spent on addressing the other issues listed above. However, Stamkos could see an opportunity to add to his Hall-of-Fame career and play with a team that he's battled against many times before.

But, it's hard to ask a player capable of scoring 40-plus goals to take a discount in a place that doesn't also have the same tax-free benefits as Tampa and other teams likely to line up with better offers.

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Sportsnet.ca / 32 Thoughts: Post-draft buzz with free agency up next

Elliotte Friedman

- What's next for Steven Stamkos?
- What the Leafs may offer Tanev
- Why St. Louis is a team to watch

Tampa Bay GM Julien BriseBois electrified the draft Saturday morning by trading Mikhail Sergachev to Utah and Tanner Jeannot to Los Angeles — with the Lightning poised to do big business as free-agency approaches.

BriseBois indicated Friday that franchise cornerstones Steven Stamkos and Victor Hedman were trending in different directions — Stamkos to free agency and Hedman to a contract extension on the first day he is eligible, July 1.

Tampa's believed priority target is Jake Guentzel, coming off a 30-goal season in Pittsburgh and Carolina. And they acquired the player Sunday, giving them exclusive negotiating rights for the final day before the market opens.

What happened between the Hurricanes and Guentzel is still being determined. According to multiple sources, Guentzel's ask was eight years with an \$8M AAV. It was made some time ago, with the two sides grinding away in negotiations since that time — perfectly normal.

On Thursday, the Hurricanes agreed to meet those terms and were prepared to discuss structure. Several teams said they heard the winger was staying in Carolina. But, with July 1 approaching, those same sources indicated Guentzel decided that, the longer it took, the more he thought about testing free-agency, as is his right.

"It looks like the market changed from when they started negotiating and now," another GM said.

THOUGHTS

1. As the Stamkos news spread over the past few days, several salivated at the thought of talking to him. We'll see how he handles this. Stamkos did not enjoy the 2016 dog-and-pony show, ending it prematurely. It's absolutely weird to process him anywhere but Tampa. Never thought I'd see the day. My money's on Nashville (no wagering on anything I say, please), but a lot of suitors are putting on their cufflinks in this dating game.
2. It's believed the Lightning proposed a couple of different concepts: the long-term low-AAV idea and a shorter structure that would eventually lead to bonus-laden one-year contracts. Stamkos would be eligible for such as soon as next summer, after he turns 35. Those would be more advantageous to Tampa for salary-cap reasons. The fact he had to wait so close to free-agency twice while so many teammates were taken care of in advance ultimately ruptured the relationship. BriseBois made it very clear during his post-draft availability that he sees things as "always about trying to build the strongest group possible."
3. Matt Duchene is staying in Dallas, barring a major collapse in negotiations.
4. My guess on Chris Tanev and Toronto is six years at around \$4M per season.
5. As a public service, I am providing my official Mitch Marner position (clip-and-save). Thesis: in about a decade, he should retire as the greatest Toronto-born Maple Leaf ever. He's that good. If it doesn't happen, everyone involved is going to regret it.
6. Columbus offered Martin Necas an extension in a potential trade for the fourth overall pick, but things didn't work out. I'm wondering if there's any chance Guentzel's impending departure changes the Hurricanes' mind on moving Necas. Maybe they go to arbitration and live with the number or negotiate a one-year deal.
7. Things I did not leave Vegas with a great read on: Where things stand with Jonathan Marchessault and Vegas or Jacob Trouba and the Rangers. The Marchessault negotiation's been a real grind. Trouba/Rangers could be a battle as he switches from a no-move to a partial no-trade. We saw what happened with Barclay Goodrow, and



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Trouba's agent, Kurt Overhardt, is no shrinking violet. One of the challenges is that Trouba was shocked by the possibility he could be traded, and is still coming to grips with it.

8. Golden Knights GM Kelly McCrimmon said post-draft that Logan Thompson asked for a trade (more opportunity) and Akira Schmid will start as their No. 3 goalie, getting time at AHL Henderson. So they are looking for an NHL backup to Adin Hill.

9. A few teams say St. Louis is sending signals they are going to try some free-agent swings.

10. Edmonton temporary GM Jeff Jackson said Friday they are trying to sign all of their unrestricted free agents.

11. On Leon Draisaitl: the thing to recognize here is that this is not just a Draisaitl negotiation. This is also a Connor McDavid conversation. They are very, very close but this is going to be a deep dive into what both are thinking in the short and long-term. These are not discussions to have in the immediate aftermath of an emotional defeat. Jackson seems prepared to slow-play this, waiting until after a new GM is hired, letting everyone breathe. The Oilers won't be concerned if no concrete answers exist for a few weeks. They didn't have to know by the draft or July 1. We'll see.

12. Sam Gagner wants to keep playing. Most importantly, wife Rachel gave him the okay.

13. Nashville's told teams — and there are a lot of interested parties — that the price for Yaroslav Askarov is either a current NHLer or a similarly highly-rated prospect who is not a goalie.

14. Philadelphia is quite good at dealing with the ups-and-downs of getting players from the KHL to North America, but there is now some uncertainty around talented young goalie Alexei Kolosov. They are hopeful things will work out.

15. To tighten the draft, the NHL leans on teams to cut down the pre-selection welcomes — shouting out the hometown party, congratulating the Stanley Cup champ, etc. In the first round, no one mentioned Florida. I've never seen that before. And one Panther reached out to say he thought it was an absolute joke.

16. Steven Lorentz was Sergei Bobrovsky's "designated shooter" in practice this season, going out early to help the goaltender work through drills. Watching some video we showed in the final, the great Zac Dalpe reached out to say that he will always be grateful to Bobrovsky. The reason? Because then-Columbus coach John Tortorella abhors morning skates, Dalpe was one of the only available players to shoot with Bobrovsky on game-days. So, he fought for the forward to stay on the NHL roster for this purpose. Dalpe said it was worth a lot of salary to him. Markus Hannikainen similarly benefitted.

17. There was a lot of debate about Connor McDavid not coming on-ice for the Conn Smythe Trophy presentation. Apparently, he did agree to do it, but before it was presented, he went into the Oilers room to address his teammates. That was so emotional he either didn't want to leave or was in no headspace to leave.

18. One coach to watch for potential AHL openings is Ottawa's Brad Ralph, who has won three straight ECHL championships with the Florida Everblades.